P4

ペルソナ4 **公式設定画集**
Official Design Works

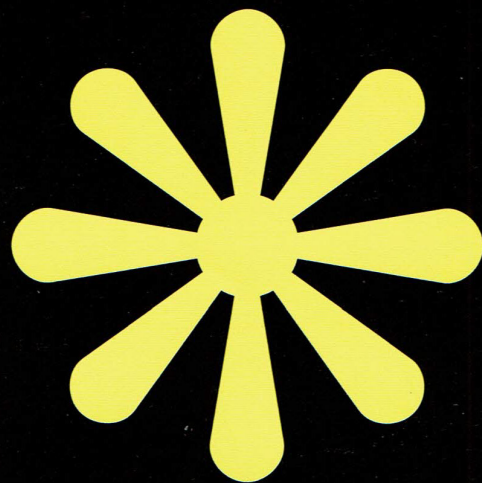# [CONTENTS]

Additional Translator's Notes:

The translations for this book came from the official English translation by M. Kirie Hayashi. The translations have been compiled together by a third party. Any notes are indicated by T/N.

For high quality image viewing, it is recommended that you view an original copy of the art book. This PDF exists purely for English readers to be able to understand the additional notes written by Shigenori Soejima and the rest of the Atlus staff.

Any untranslated text is almost always headers/subtitles or labels (i.e. notes like "early draft" or character portrait model labels like "sad expression") that can usually be interpreted by context.
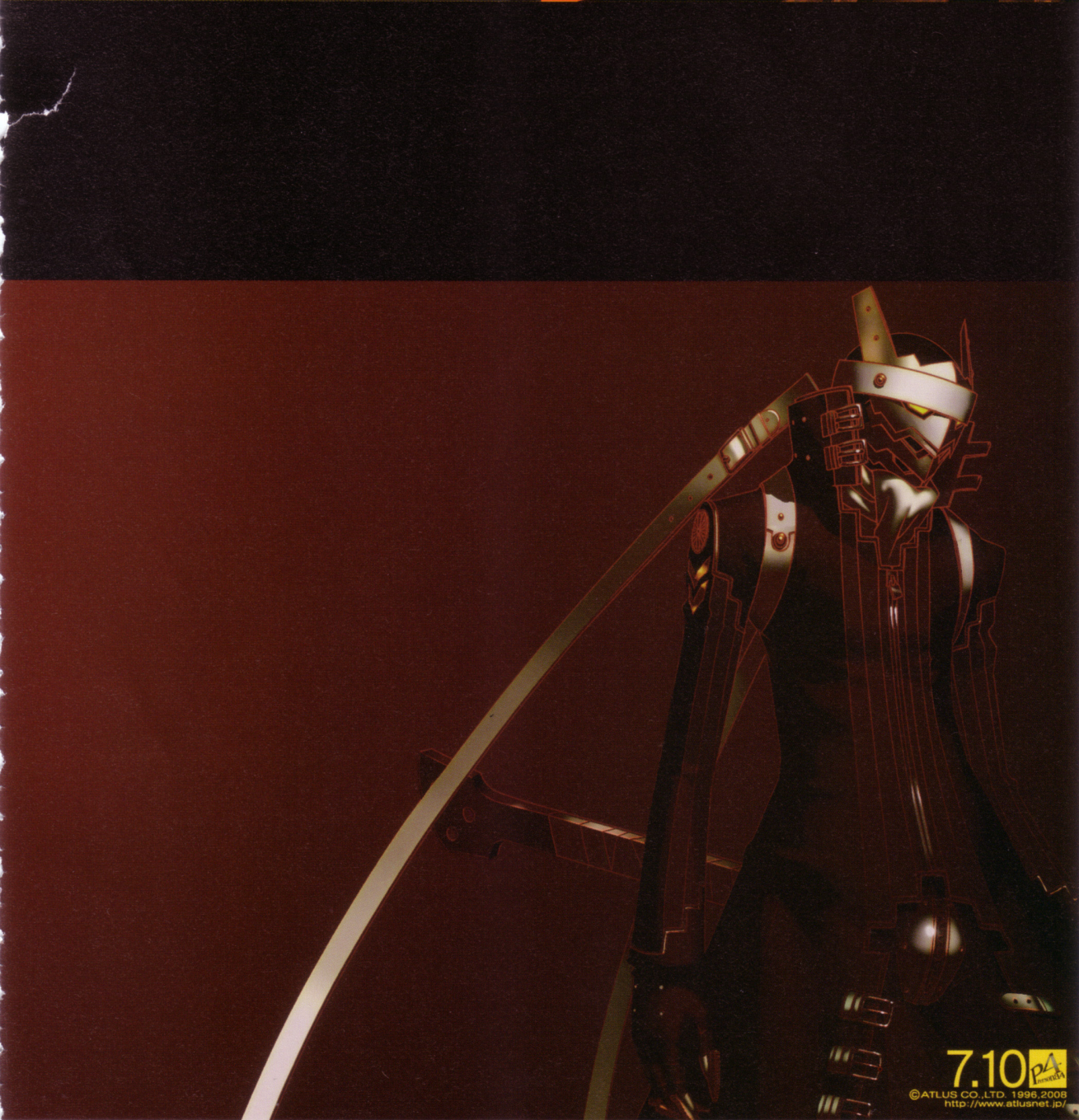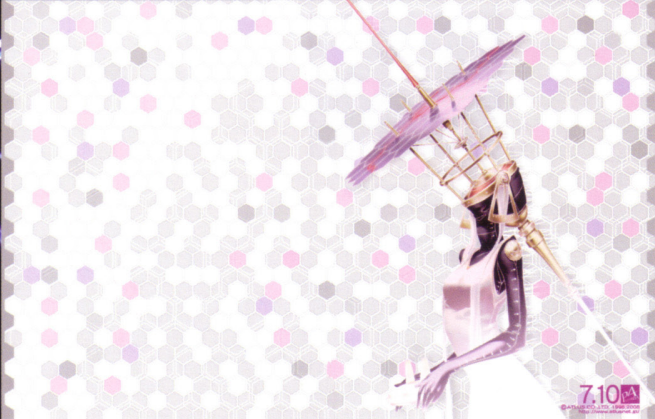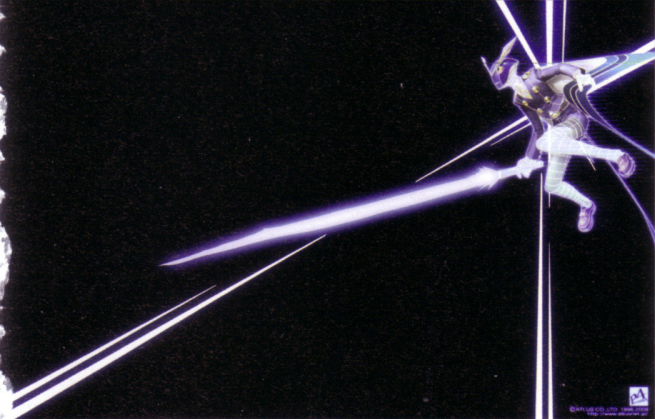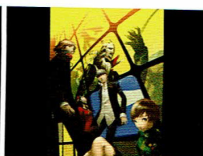
P4
PERSONA4

KINTOKIDOUJI

Chapter 1
*
Main Characters

Protagonist

If the Protagonist was a Power Ranger, he'd be the Blue Ranger.

For the Protagonist's design, I went for a wild guy with a slightly bad attitude, something that isn't part of the "young man" archetype often used for main characters. I chose this concept because I wanted the main character of "Persona 4" to be defined by the player's choices, and also because I wanted to set him apart from the main character of "Persona 3". For me, creating a protagonist that was different enough from the main character of "Persona 3", while still ensuring that none of the player's choices would seem too out of character, meant offering a protagonist that wasn't too altruistic or too hung up on ideals like justice. If the Protagonist was a Power Ranger, he'd be the Blue Ranger. I think of the Red Ranger as being the obvious leader, with a steady brow and sparkling eyes. The Blue Ranger, on the other hand, stands silently by the Red Ranger's side, often at an angle, ready to back his leader up with an equal level of skill. For the Protagonist's design, the feature I focused on most was his eyes. I thought that having his eyes peeking out from under a

fringe of hair would make for a cool look. I designed the collar of his school uniform to stand a bit taller than the other characters' collars in order to really bring out his intense look as well as the highlights in his eyes. The Protagonist's facial expression looks like it's always set in a half-glare, and that was something I incorporated into Izanagi's design as well.

I designed Izanagi to be as manly as possible, a real "man's man". (laughs) As much as I wanted to pour all of that masculinity into the Protagonist himself, I felt it would be a bit too cliché if I made him look too much like a Japanese school cheering squad member. The design of his Persona, however, provided me with the opportunity to go a bit overboard. Arming Izanagi with what looks like a massive knife was also part of my plan to give him a truly manly look. The Izanagi from Japanese mythology is usually armed with a pike, but a knife is a more common item that is readily identified as a "dangerous weapon". If you walked around with a knife in your hand in real life today, it wouldn't be long

before you were stopped by a police officer. Historically, however, knives were only carried by mature adults, men who had proven themselves to be capable of wielding a weapon responsibly; it was a symbol of manhood. As a result, it was common for young men to think that merely carrying a knife would be enough to make them a man, or at least to feel an urge to rush to the point where they would be granted that privilege. That aspect of youth psychology is reflected in the fact that the Protagonist's Persona is armed with a knife.

For Izanagi-no-Okami's design, I simply wanted to take Izanagi and make him look even tougher. This was accomplished by giving him more pointy bits that stuck out, and making them harder, sharper, and longer. Pretty simple, right? (laughs) If you look closely, you'll see that Izanagi-no-Okami is wearing a necktie. Since Izanagi is dressed in the traditional school uniform of a young male, having Izanagi-no-Okami dressed more like a grown man going to work represented growth and maturity.

[Soejima]

総攻撃・冬

総攻撃・夏
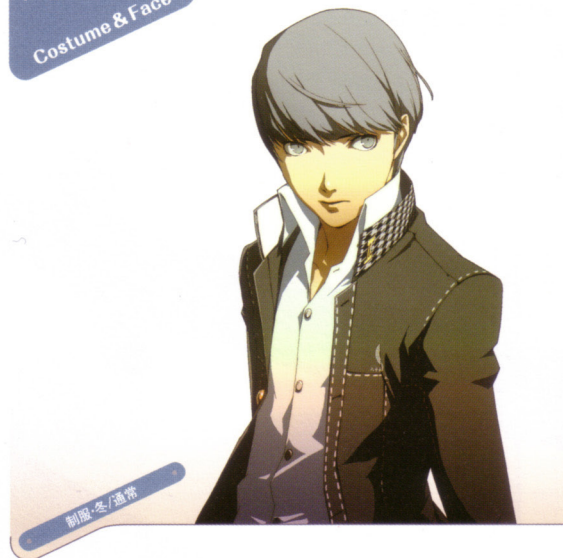
制服・冬/通常

制服・夏/通常

戦闘時・冬/通常

戦闘時・夏/通常

PERSONA
IZANAGI
《イザナギ》

PERSONA
IZANAGIOKAMI
《伊邪那岐大神》

主人公決定稿

主人公ラフデザイン

主人公女装ラフ
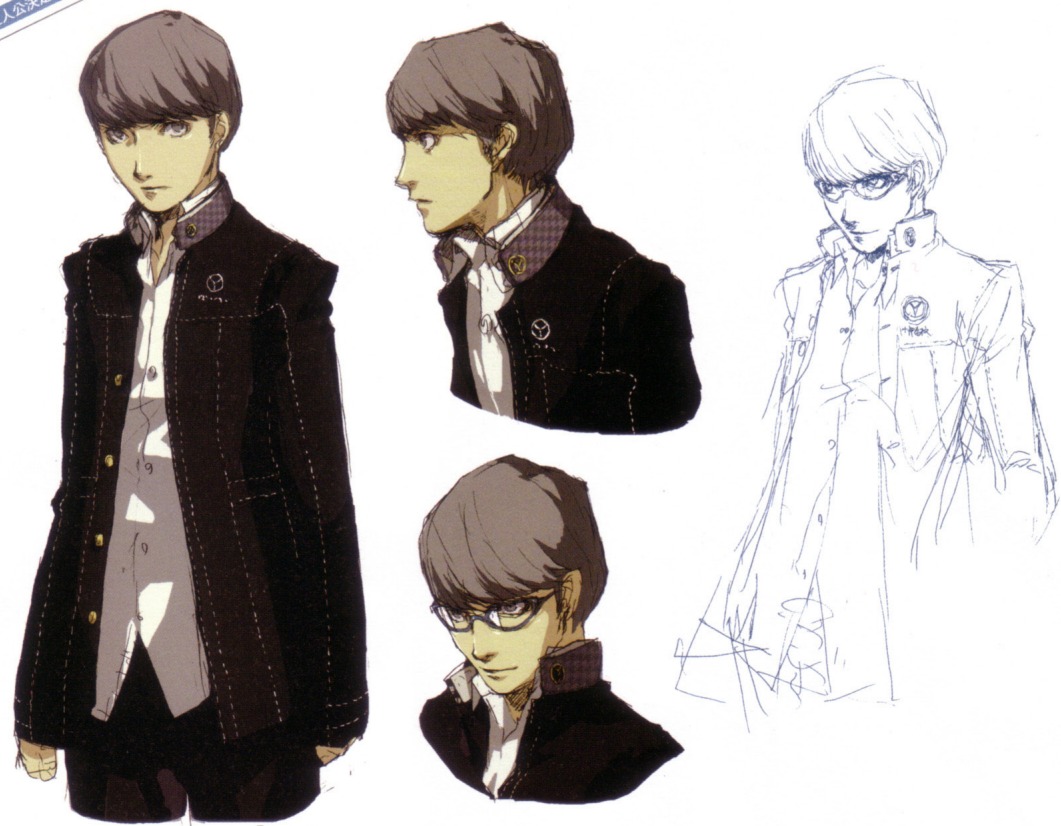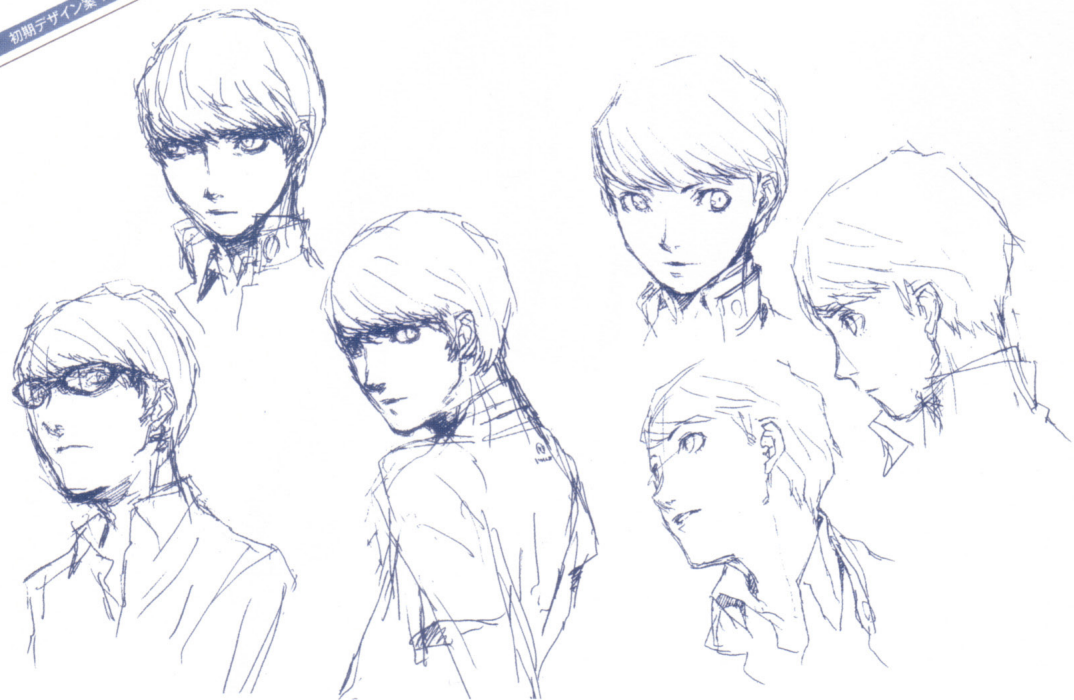
Protagonist - Baby Face Version

初期デザイン案1

← High Socks

Roughillustration

イザナギ原画

Close-up of Izanagi's eyes

イザナギ矛

イザナギ別ver

伊邪那岐大神原画

イザナギデザインラフ

Is this belt too simple?

⊘ **from SOEJIMA**

Izanagi's feet have sharp edges, like skates. I actually went with this style for his feet because I wanted to give his design a Japanese flavor, and I based his footwear on the shape of tengu-geta, the kind of geta that only have one "tooth". This design makes him look taller, so I thought it was cool. (laughs)

Yosuke Hanamura

My own personal take on Yosuke's character is that he is not a particularly artistic soul, and any visualization produced by his limited imagination would be simplistic and cheap.

Yosuke grew up in the city before moving to the small country town that the game takes place in. I wanted to make sure his design reflected this aspect of his character, so I gave him a set of headphones to set him apart from the other characters, and this is also the reason he keeps his unkempt hairstyle dyed brown. The main focus of Yosuke's design was to make him a good-looking guy. As far as his role in the game is concerned, Yosuke acts as the mouth that voices the thoughts and opinions that the player no doubt has while playing the game. These things cannot be voiced by the main character, of course, since he does not speak in the game. In other words, Yosuke is like the "Persona 4" version of Junpei from "Persona 3". As a result, the development staff often referred to Yosuke as "Junpei" during development, despite the fact that we already had the name "Yosuke" for him. (laughs) Director Hashino insisted that I make Yosuke a

"pretty boy" in order to make him distinct from Junpei, though that is not to say that Junpei was ugly or anything... (laughs) In order to grant Hashino's wishes, I paid a lot of attention to the shape of Yosuke's nose and the entire T-zone of his face in general while designing him. This is because a carefully crafted T-zone is a must when designing a handsome male character.

With all of the Persona designs for this game, I tried to imagine what kind of image each character would form in their head when they heard the name of their Persona. For example, Jiraiya is a famous "noble rogue" in Japanese folklore who was a ninja bandit of sorts. There was more to the character, of course, but that's probably all Yosuke would know. My own personal take on Yosuke's character is that he is not a particularly artistic soul, and any visualization produced by his limited imagination would be simplistic and cheap. (laughs) So

when Yosuke heard the name "Jiraiya", he would connect the notion of a "noble rogue" with a "hero", which would mean a red scarf is a must; he would relate ninjas to sneaking around, which is where the camouflage pattern comes from; and when it came to Susa-no-O manipulating storms, he would of course assume that Susa-no-O needs a turbine. In this way, each Persona's design reflects its user's personality as much as it does the nature of the Persona itself. Jiraiya has camouflage patterns on his clothes because Yosuke likes that sort of thing. Jiraiya and Susa-no-O both have a similar style because that is how Yosuke would picture "the coolest superhero ever!". I avoided designing Jiraiya with any obvious joints in order to give him an appearance similar to those old toys that have a rubbery exterior with wires inside to allow for freeform posing. This reflects the fact that Yosuke sort of views his Persona as a toy. [Soejima]

Name: **Yosuke Hanamura**
Gender: **Male**
Date of Birth: **June 22, 1994 (Cancer)**
Age: **16 (17)**
Height: **175cm**
Weight: **58kg**
Blood Type: **A**

Cut in

総攻撃・冬

総攻撃・夏

Costume & Face

制服・冬/通常

制服/夏/照れ驚き

戦闘時・冬/怒り

戦闘時・夏/苦備

私服・冬/怒り

浴衣・天城屋旅館/凹み

半袖・林間学校/露天風呂/笑顔

私服・夏/照れ

バイト着・夏/驚き

バイト着・冬/悲哀

ジャージ/コミカル怒り

女装・文化祭/怒り

もう一人の陽介/笑み

もう一人の陽介/通常

PERSONA
SUSANO
《スサノオ》

PERSONA
JIRAIYA
《ジライヤ》

花村陽介

陽介決定稿

決定稿着彩前

陽介ラフデザイン

陽介女装ラフ
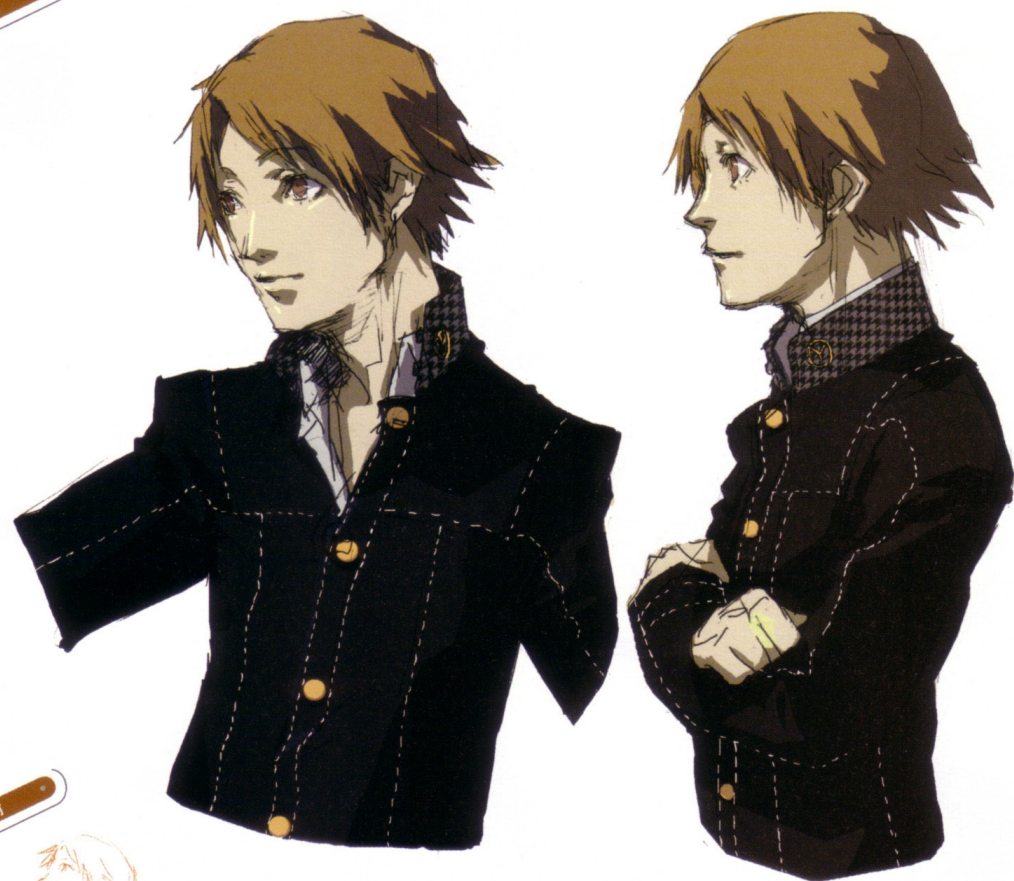
If it's too creepy, we can lengthen the skirt.

from SOEJIMA

Designing Yosuke was a relatively simple process. Drawing good-looking males is easy because you can rely on traditional concepts of what is attractive. It would be difficult if I was asked to design multiple handsome characters for the same project, as making them all look distinct from one another could prove tricky.
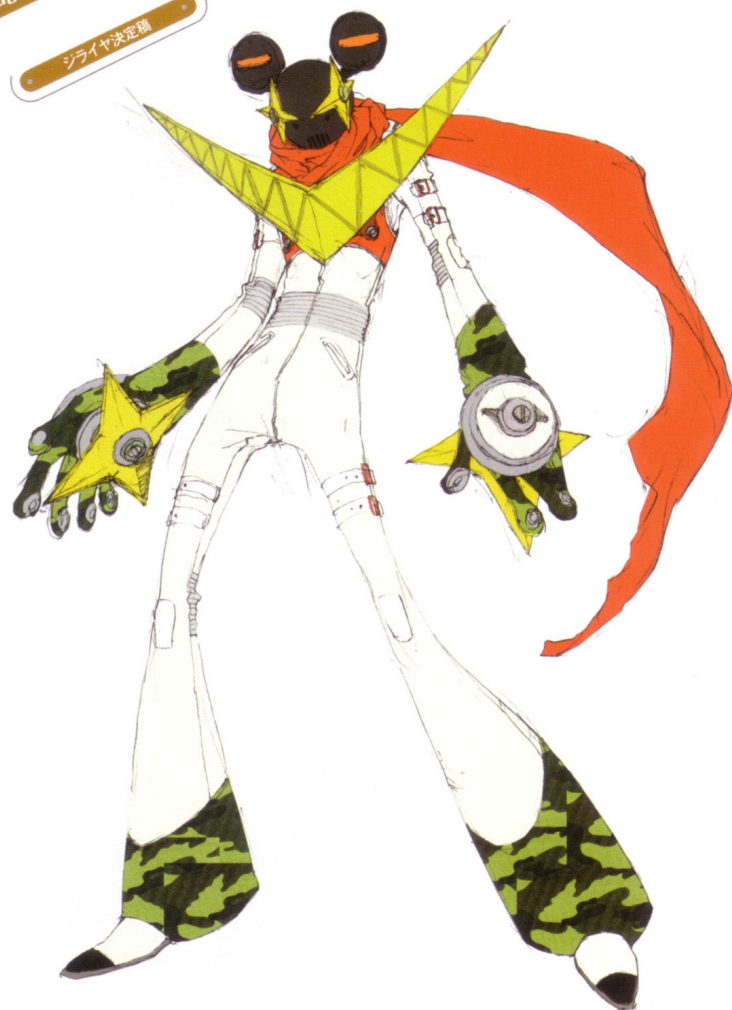
ジライヤ決定稿

Concept - Construct

ジライヤ初期デザイン案1

ジライヤ初期デザイン案2
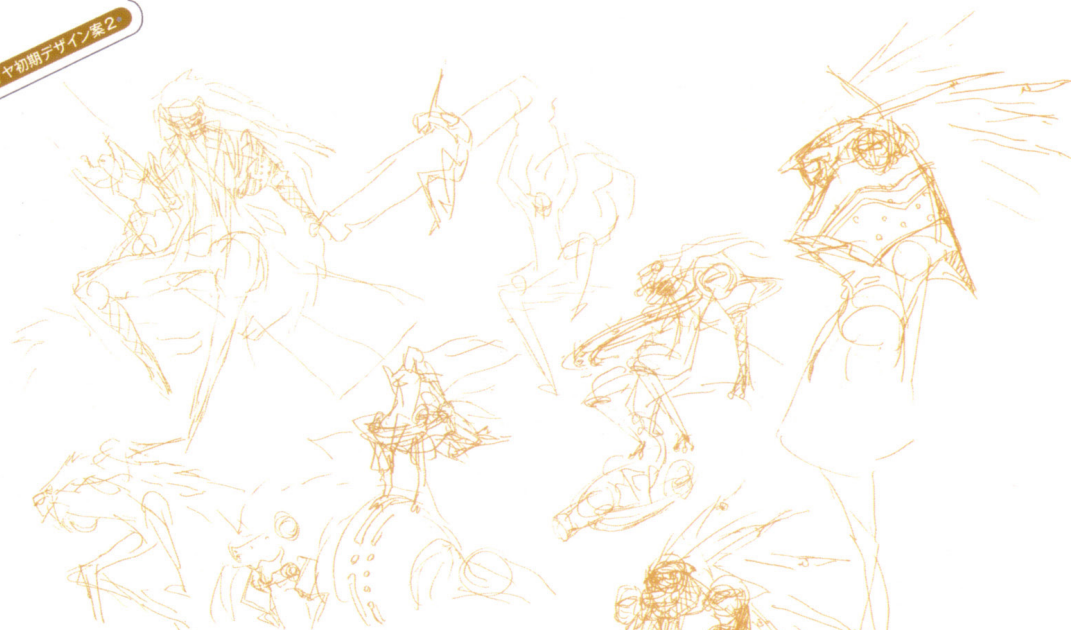
スサノオ決定稿
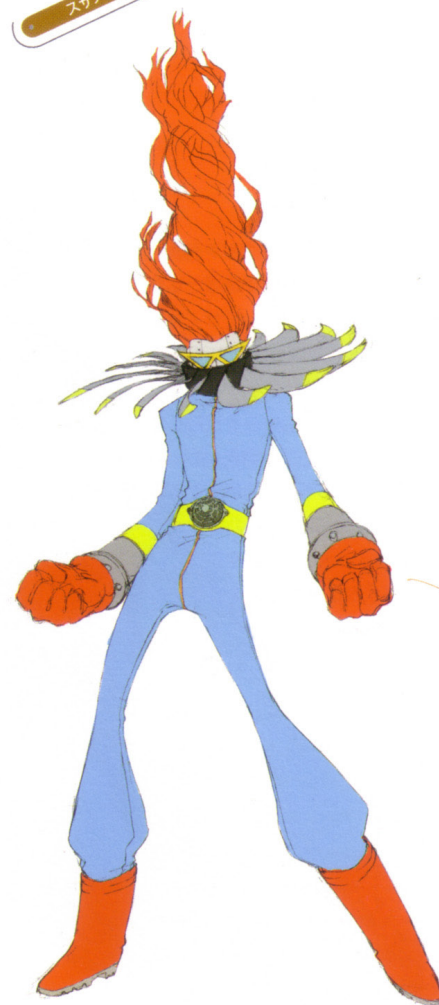
Chie Satonaka

In some ways, Chie was the turning point that defined the overall design flavor of the entire game.

The concept for Chie's design was "a cute girl who could actually exist in real life". Trying to design a game character who seems like someone you could meet in real life meant I needed to pay close attention to her appearance. The hardest part was probably getting the right balance between features like her creased double eyelids set over appealingly large eyes, and her slightly duck-like mouth. Another tricky balancing act was the shape of her head, as it couldn't be too long or too round. Once I had the shape of her head the way I wanted it, I still had to figure out how to put her hair on it. I was so picky that I convinced myself that I needed to rework her design quite a few times. One of the things that defines Chie as a character is her love of cheap, retro things like pins and other accessories. In some ways, Chie was the turning point that defined the overall design flavor of the entire game. I wanted to exaggerate the fact that the story takes place in a rural town, and one of the best ways to do that is to have someone running around in a jersey jacket. Unfortunately, the colors of a school jersey just didn't look very nice within the context of the game, so I had to think of something else. That's when I decided to try taking a retro-style approach to Chie's jersey. That was a real light bulb moment for me, when I realized that anytime I needed to put something "utterly lame" in to bring out the rural vibe, I could add a retro flavor to it to make it cool and in sync with the game's atmosphere. This is how Chie single-handedly set the design foundation for the rest of the game. For this reason, I think it's quite fair to say that Chie Satonaka truly embodies the identity of "Persona 4", which may be why the game's theme color (yellow) looks so darn good on her.

Most of the Personae in "Persona 4" were based on legendary figures from Japanese mythology and folklore. I guess you could say they're like Japanese superheroes. Tomoe and Suzuka Gongen aren't exactly what you might call major players in the history books, but they're definitely powerful women who could go toe-to-toe with some of the toughest male warriors of legend. That's what made them so perfect for Chie, as they are like her role models. Since Chie's personal tastes were incorporated into the designs of Tomoe and Suzuka Gongen, they are depicted to be pretty physically macho. Tomoe's outfit is also an homage to Chie's favorite martial artist and movie star. Tomoe and Suzuka Gongen both have helmets on their heads because there was a rule that each Persona must wear something to cover their face. When working on these two, I tried to imagine what a person piloting a tank might wear to cover their face, and that's how the full-faced helmet look came about. That decision may also have been influenced by the fact that I love motorcycles. (laughs) Once Tomoe evolves into Suzuka Gongen, her helmet changes from a standard street bike helmet to an off-road bike helmet. I wanted this change to convey the idea that street bikes can only travel over paved roads, whereas off-road bikes make their own roads. It was this level of outrageous toughness that I wanted to express with Suzuka Gongen. [Soejima]

Name: **Chie Satonaka**
Gender: **Female**
Date of Birth: **July 30, 1994 (Leo)**
Age: **16 (17)**
Height: **158cm**
Weight: **Muscle weighs more than fat, just so you know.**
Blood Type: **B**

Cut in

Costume & Face

総攻撃・冬

総攻撃・夏

制服・冬/通常

制服・夏/笑顔

戦闘時・冬/怒り

戦闘時・夏/苦痛

私服・冬/悲哀

水着・林間学校/照れ驚き

ジャージ/通常

タオル巻き/驚き

私服・夏/笑顔

浴衣・夏祭り/照れ

鼻眼鏡

もう一人の千枝/通常

もう一人の千枝/笑み

もう一人の千枝/怒り

PERSONA
TOMOE
《トモエ》

PERSONA
SUZUKAGONGEN
《スズカゴンゲン》

初期デザイン案

メガネパターン案

Chie Satonaka
First Draft*

決定稿
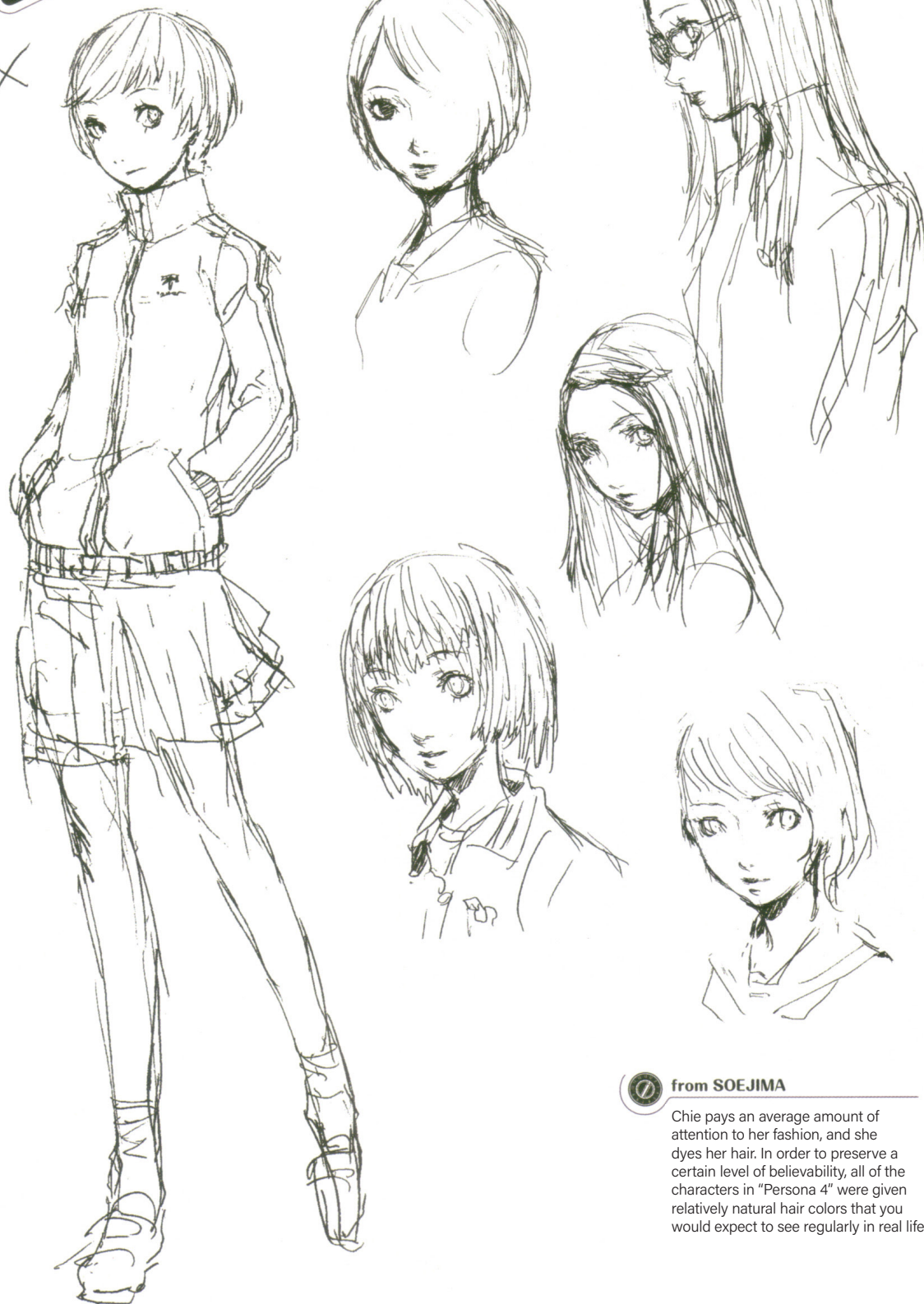
from SOEJIMA

Chie pays an average amount of attention to her fashion, and she dyes her hair. In order to preserve a certain level of believability, all of the characters in "Persona 4" were given relatively natural hair colors that you would expect to see regularly in real life.

T/N: the official English translation for this says "Tae Satonaka" but the original Japanese character seems to be Chie's name, so I think it might have been an error.

トモエ決定稿

from SOEJIMA
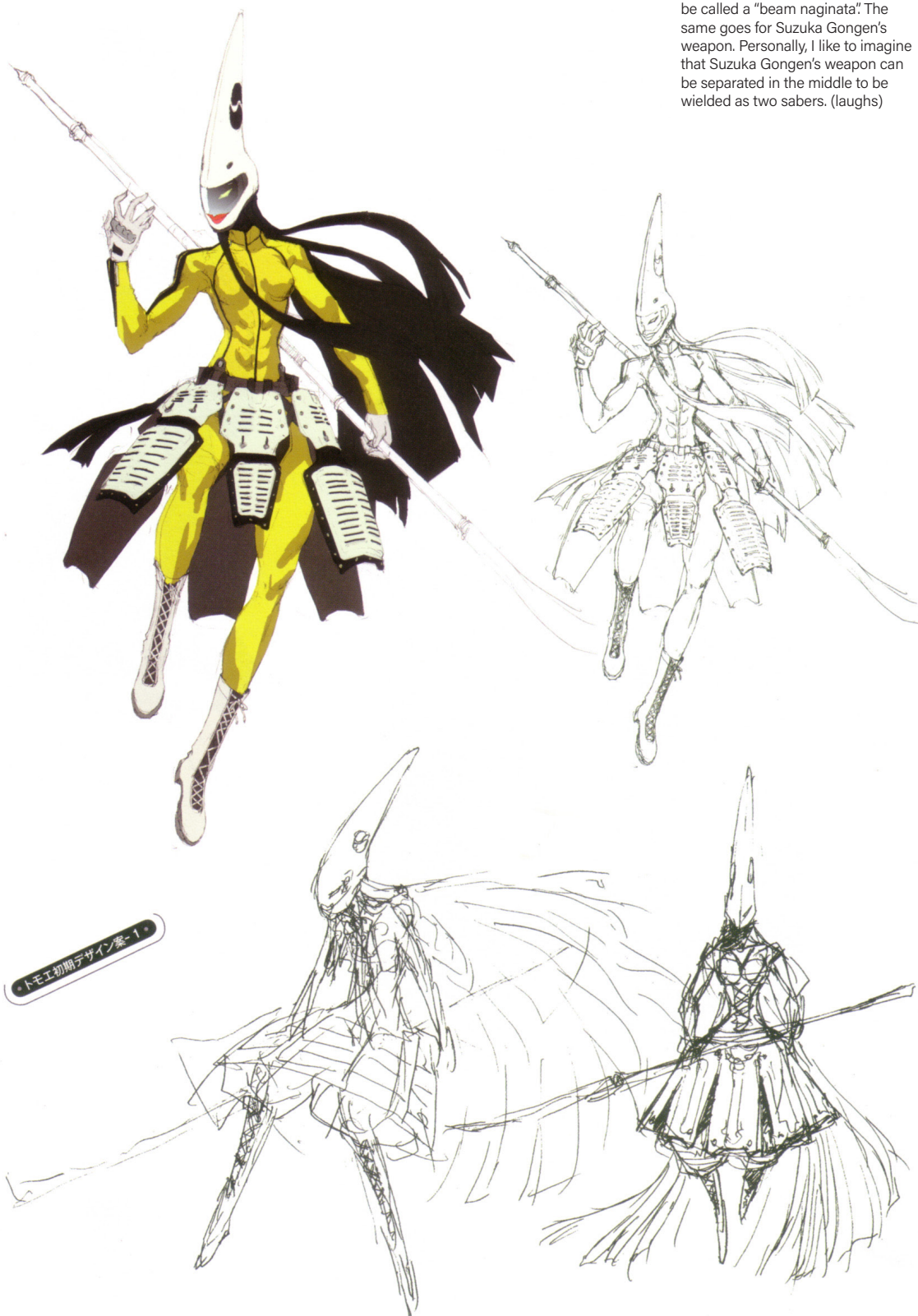
Tomoe is armed with a naginata, but the blade portion is replaced with beams of light, so I guess it would be called a "beam naginata". The same goes for Suzuka Gongen's weapon. Personally, I like to imagine that Suzuka Gongen's weapon can be separated in the middle to be wielded as two sabers. (laughs)

スズカゴンゲン初期デザイン案

トモエ初期デザイン案-1
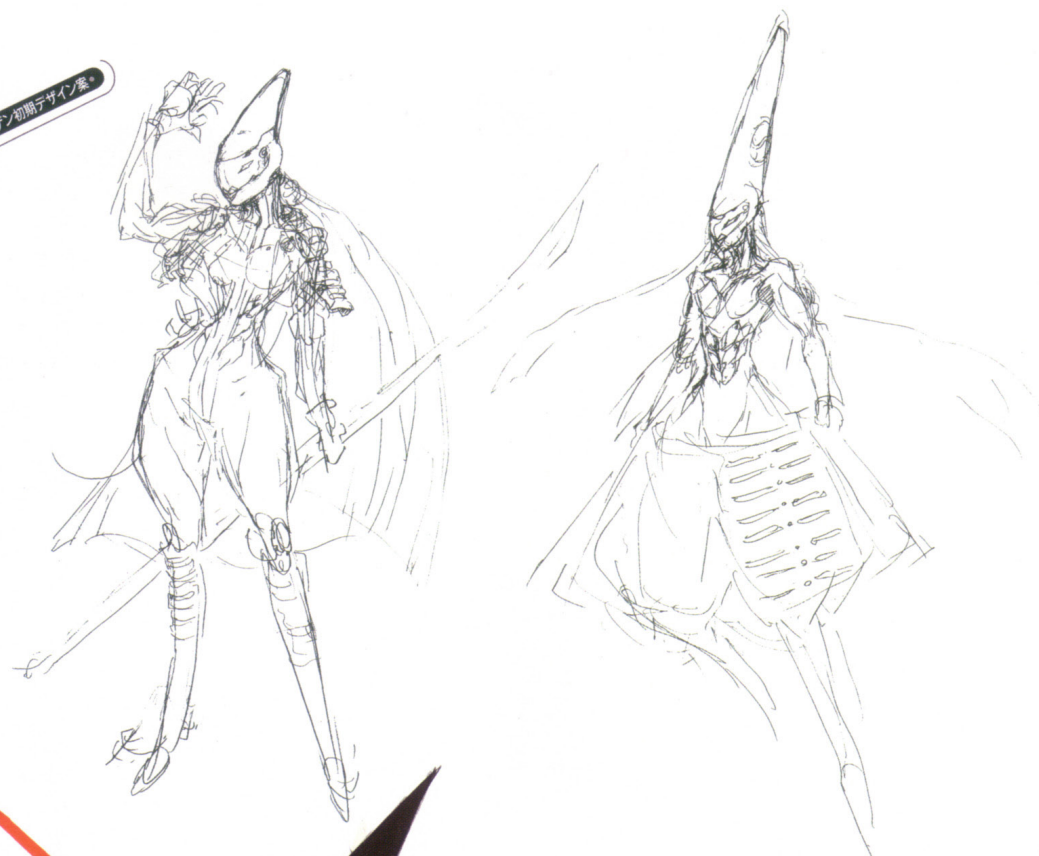
The armor on this arm should be the same as it is on the left arm.

Light beam

スズカゴンゲン決定稿

Yukiko Amagi

I knew that "the woman" Konohana Sakuya's design would have to revolve around things like a cheerleader, pompoms, sakura blossoms, and the color pink. (laughs)

The concept for Yukiko's design was the stereotypical Japanese beauty. The fact that she was designed to be an almost symbolic and manga-ish beautiful girl makes her design style closer to Yosuke's, so she could be considered the polar opposite of Chie, who was designed to be more of a realistic girl. I focused heavily on Yukiko's eyes and eyebrows, as I felt those would be the best features with which to convey her strong core. To give off that classic Japanese beauty vibe, I used features that were considered beautiful back in the day, like eyes that are slightly angled upward and thicker eyebrows. Yukiko is the kind of girl who would look great in traditional Japanese clothing. The part I had to be most careful with was her bangs. If I had cut a hard, straight line with her bangs, she would have been a bit too creepy, like those old Japanese dolls. That's why I intentionally left her bangs uneven and somewhat parted. Yukiko's Persona, Konohana Sakuya, does not technically have a whole lot to do with Izanagi as far as mythology is concerned. However, she is the goddess who stands as the epitome of

femininity, so I designed her to make a sort of visual pair with the Persona Izanagi. "The man" Izanagi's design incorporates elements like a gakuran (male school uniform), blade, and cheering squad vibe, so I knew "the woman" Konohana Sakuya's design would have to revolve around things like a cheerleader, pompoms, sakura blossoms, and the color pink. (laughs) The pompoms are shaped like fans connected in the middle that open up in an outward spiral. The sakura blossom played a prominent role in the pompoms' design, and is also the shared symbol of Konohana Sakuya and Yukiko. The hardest part of designing Konohana Sakuya was figuring out a way to tie her cheerleader fashion to her somewhat Ultraman-esque face. It was tough, but also a lot of fun. I don't often use cute colors in my designs, so working with so much pink was quite a treat and made Konohana Sakuya the most enjoyable Persona to work on... though I do hate having to draw her whole body because it's such a hassle. (laughs)
Amaterasu is such a well-known goddess that I wanted to make

sure I did right by her. The fact that the overflowing inner light is so bright that it blurs the outline of her body is a reference to the mythological Amaterasu being the goddess of the sun. It also helped to keep things simple, as I was worried that an intensely detailed design would take away from the character's divinity. The blade she is wielding is the Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi, which is also the weapon used by Naoto's Yamato Takeru. Did anyone notice that? Completely ignoring the question of whether it is okay for two instances of this sword to exist at the same time, I armed them both with the Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi to stay true to mythology. The true Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi of lore is actually said to be a double-edged blade, but most people imagine a traditional, single-edged Japanese katana when they hear that there was a Japanese sword called Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi, which is why I designed it as such for its appearances in "Persona 4". The designs for the arm pieces were based on the "Kyokujitsujukosho", the second class of the Order of the Rising Sun... but I will refrain from going into details on that. (laughs)   [Soejima]

Main CG

Name: **Yukiko Amagi**
Gender: **Female**
Date of Birth: **December 8, 1994**
(Sagittarius)
Age: **16 (17)**
Height: **164cm**
Weight: **It's a secret.**
Blood Type: **O**

Cut in

Costume & Face

制服・冬/爆笑。

ジャージ/困り。

水着・林間学校/照れ隠き。

タオル巻き・露天風呂/驚き。

私服・夏/照れ。

修学旅行/酔っ払い

修学旅行/酔い爆笑

着物/笑顔。

私服・冬/悲哀。

浴衣・夏祭り/照れ。

もう一人の雪子/笑み。

PERSONA
KONOHANASAKUYA
《コノハナサクヤ》

PERSONA
AMATERASU
《アマテラス》

雪子洋服案

from SOEJIMA

In the game, Yukiko wears a cardigan during the winter months, but my first design actually had her in a red sweater. Personally, I prefer the sweater because it reminds me of the sweaters that were popular during my parents' time, and I thought it suited the game's retro theme.
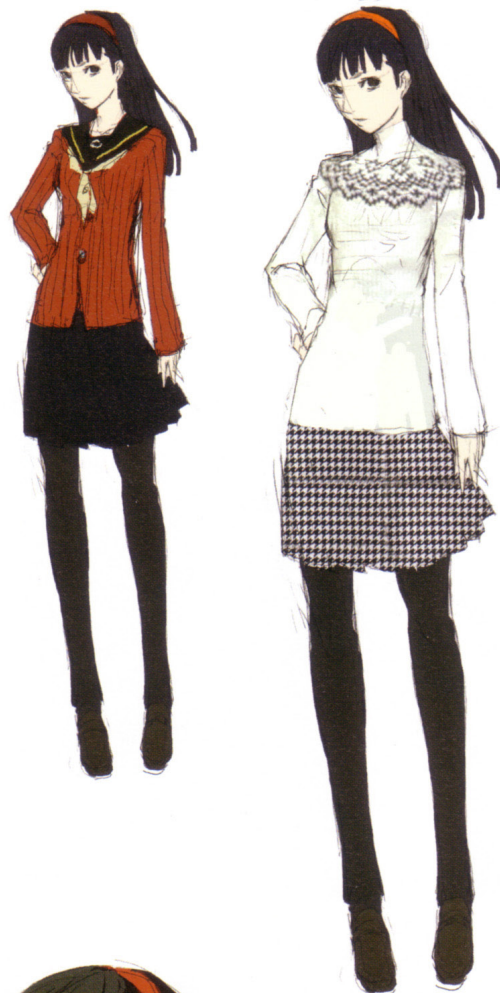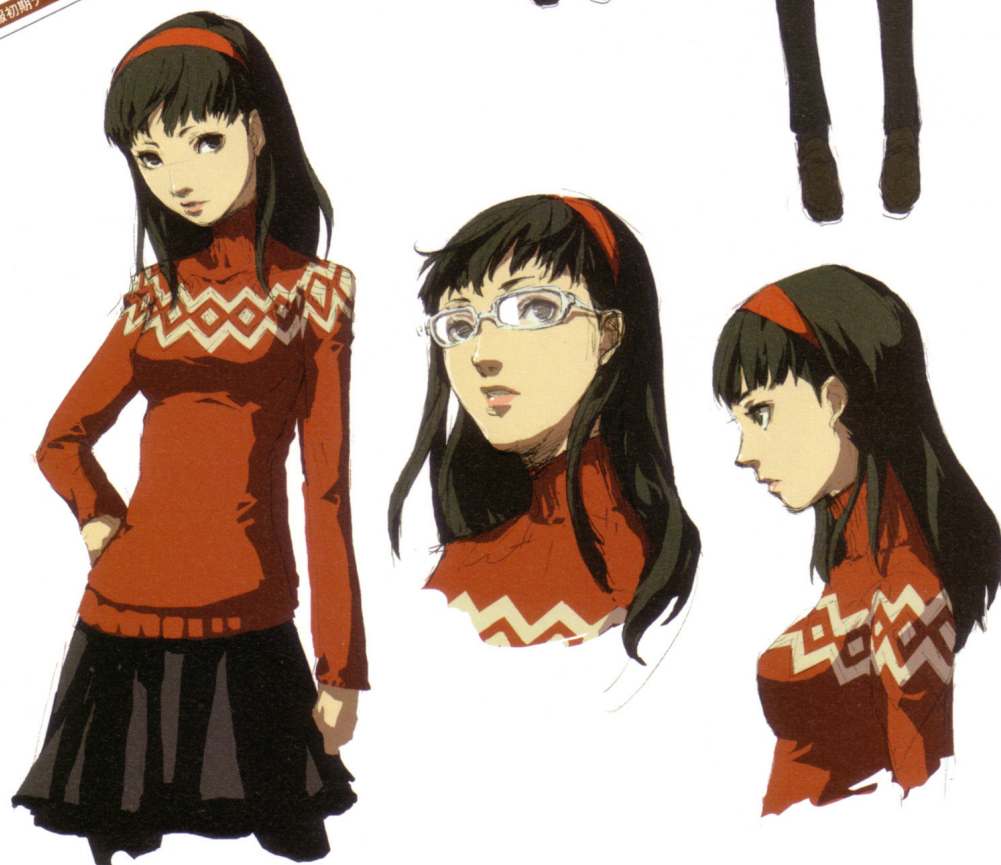
雪子初期デザイン案1

私服初期デザイン案
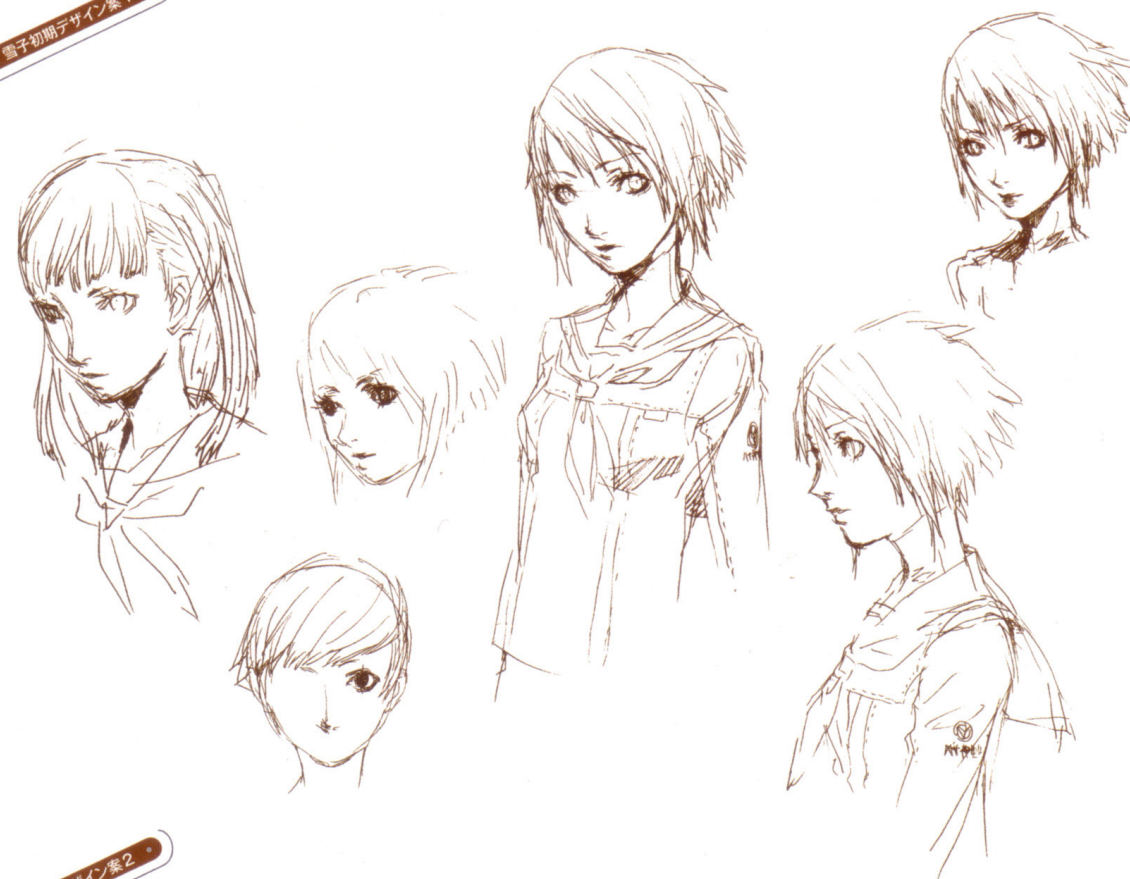
雪子初期デザイン案2
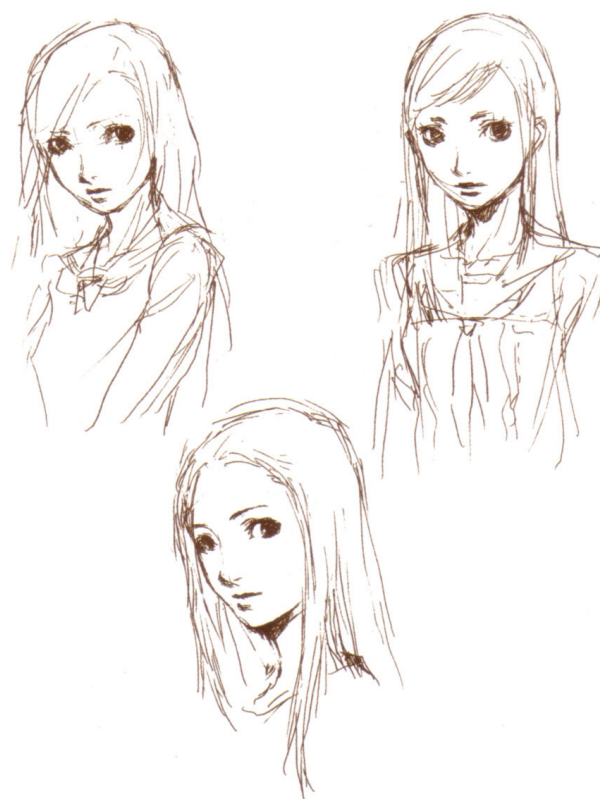
Yukiko

Chie

コノハナサクヤ決定稿

I was lazy and used a gradation, but please make each petal its own shade of pink.

決定稿着彩前

mobile

コノハナサクヤラフイメージ
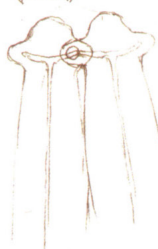
Konohana Sakuya doesn't have toes or heels because she is always floating. I believe that characters who are always floating look better without completely formed feet. On top of that, I also happen to really like this shape.

アマテラスラフデザイン
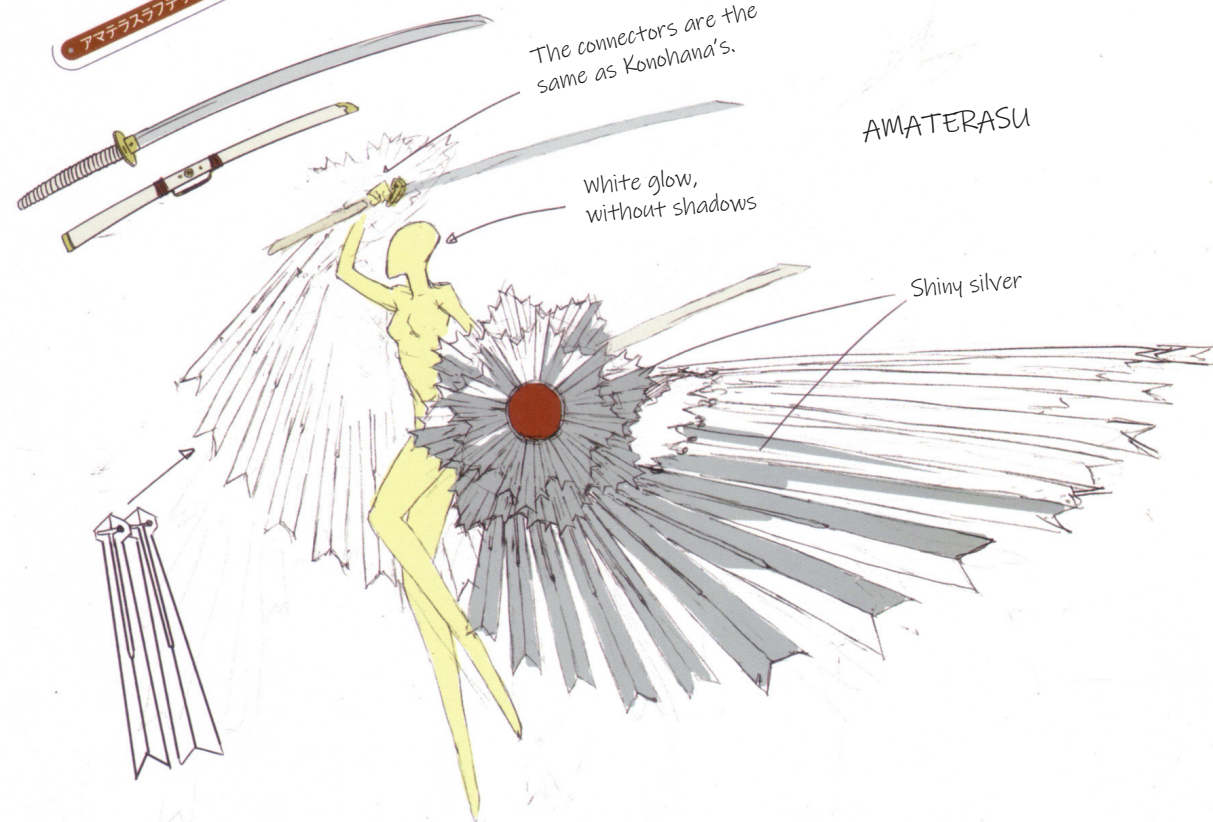
The connectors are the same as Konohana's.

AMATERASU

White glow, without shadows

Shiny silver

Kanji Tatsumi

It is my hope that players saw Kanji as an unfortunate soul who suffered from prejudice based on his appearance.

Kanji maintains a self-imposed distance between himself and others by playing the role of "chaotic rebel". When designing Kanji, I tried to channel images of outlaws. The skull on his shirt is his way of announcing just how "bad" he is, along with his pierced ears and dyed hair. I literally filled Kanji's design with trademarks of a rebel. The overkill and ridiculously obvious things like the skull shirt and the way he wears his gakuran are all meant to hint at the fact that this is just a facade put on by someone who doesn't really know what being a badass is all about. By overdoing the rebel look, I was able to make Kanji more than an average hoodlum, and mold him into a sort of comical presence. Based on these hints and his dialogue, I'm sure the players quickly surmised that he's actually a nice guy.

Kanji is suspected of many things, including belonging to a biker gang, being a bully, and being homosexual. I gave Kanji a naturally intimidating face because I thought it would make sense as far as people making up rumors about him based solely on his looks. Plus, the idea that someone who looks so scary actually turns out to be a really nice guy is also much more interesting story-wise. Designing an intimidating face involved elements like narrowed eyes, and a lack of open space between the eyebrows and eyelids. It is my hope that players saw Kanji as an unfortunate soul who suffered from prejudice based on his appearance. There are two things about Kanji's design that I'm always very aware of when drawing him. The first is the slightly concave appearance of his forehead. This was just one of those details that I thought would make him look tougher and more violent. The other is his hairline... I have this tendency to place his hairline farther and farther back every time I draw him, and it got to the point where the staff started trading jokes about Kanji and his male pattern baldness. That's why I always consciously push his hairline forward when I'm drawing him. (laughs)

Take-Mikazuchi is the god of lightning, so the Persona's arms are massive generators. The skeleton paint job is there to match him up with Kanji's shirt and general preference, but also because seeing flashes of a person's skeleton is a common effect when someone is hit by lightning. Of course, some people point out that, because Take-Mikazuchi is the one who looks like a skeleton, it's him who's getting struck by lightning, not the one who's striking others with it. (laughs) I guess you could say I added a bit of a comical touch to his design to match that of Kanji's. I picture Kanji being all, "Look! He's a skeleton! How cool is that!?" Rokuten Maoh's design was based on Nobunaga Oda, with the pointy bits on his face meant to represent Nobunaga's mustache, and the round piece on his head meant to represent Nobunaga's helmet. The flame decals all over his body were supposed to match Kanji's tank top, and I imagined him being all happy about it, saying, "That looks so American! My Persona is badass!" But once again, some people pointed out that this may be taken as a joke about how Nobunaga was burned to death within Honno-ji. (laughs)

[Soejima]

069

Name: **Kanji Tatsumi**
Gender: **Male**
Date of Birth: **January 19, 1996**
Age: **15 (16)**
Height: **183cm**
Weight: **65kg**
Blood Type: **A**

Cut in

総攻撃・冬

総攻撃・夏

Costume & Face

制服・冬/通常

制服・夏/笑顔

戦闘時・冬/怒り

戦闘時・夏/悲哀

テレビ出演時/ぼかし

私服・冬/驚き

半身・林間学校/露天風呂/照れ驚き

浴衣・天城屋旅館/がっくり

制服・冬/照れ怒り

私服・夏/苦悩

女装・文化祭/怒り

女装・文化祭/気合い

ジャージ・林間学校/悲哀

ジャージ・林間学校/鼻血

もう一人の完二/笑み

鼻眼鏡/怒り
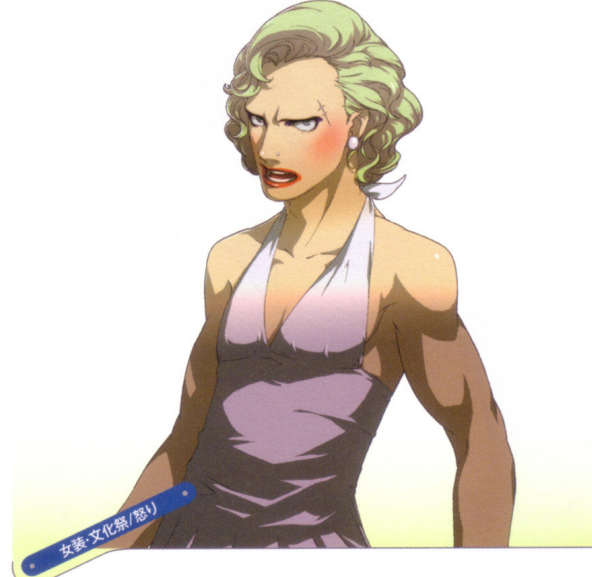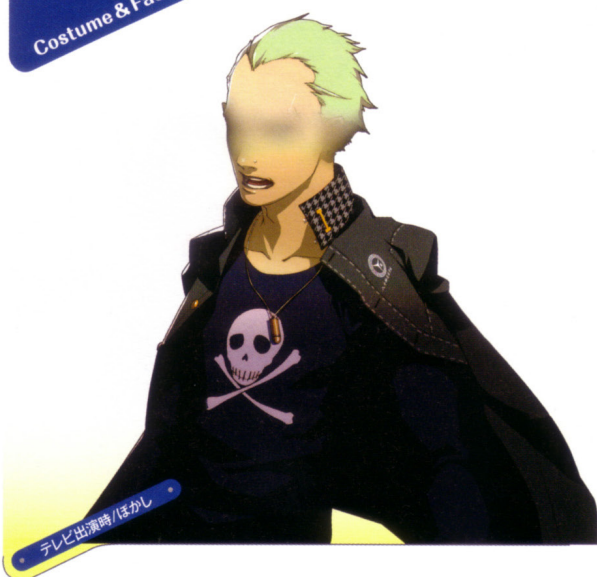
PERSONA
TAKEMIKADUCHI
《タケミカヅチ》
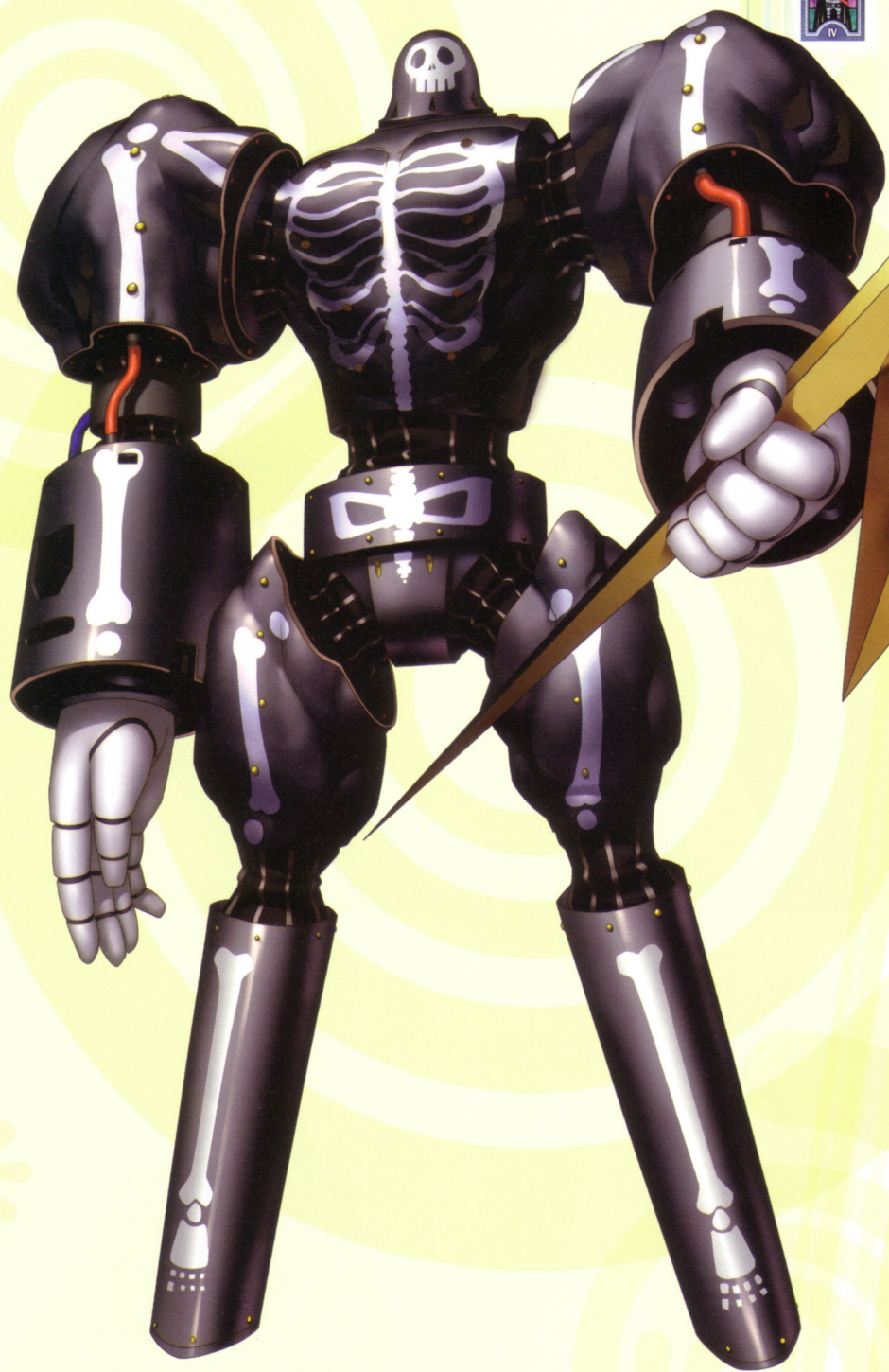
PERSONA
ROKUTENMAO
《ロクテンマオウ》
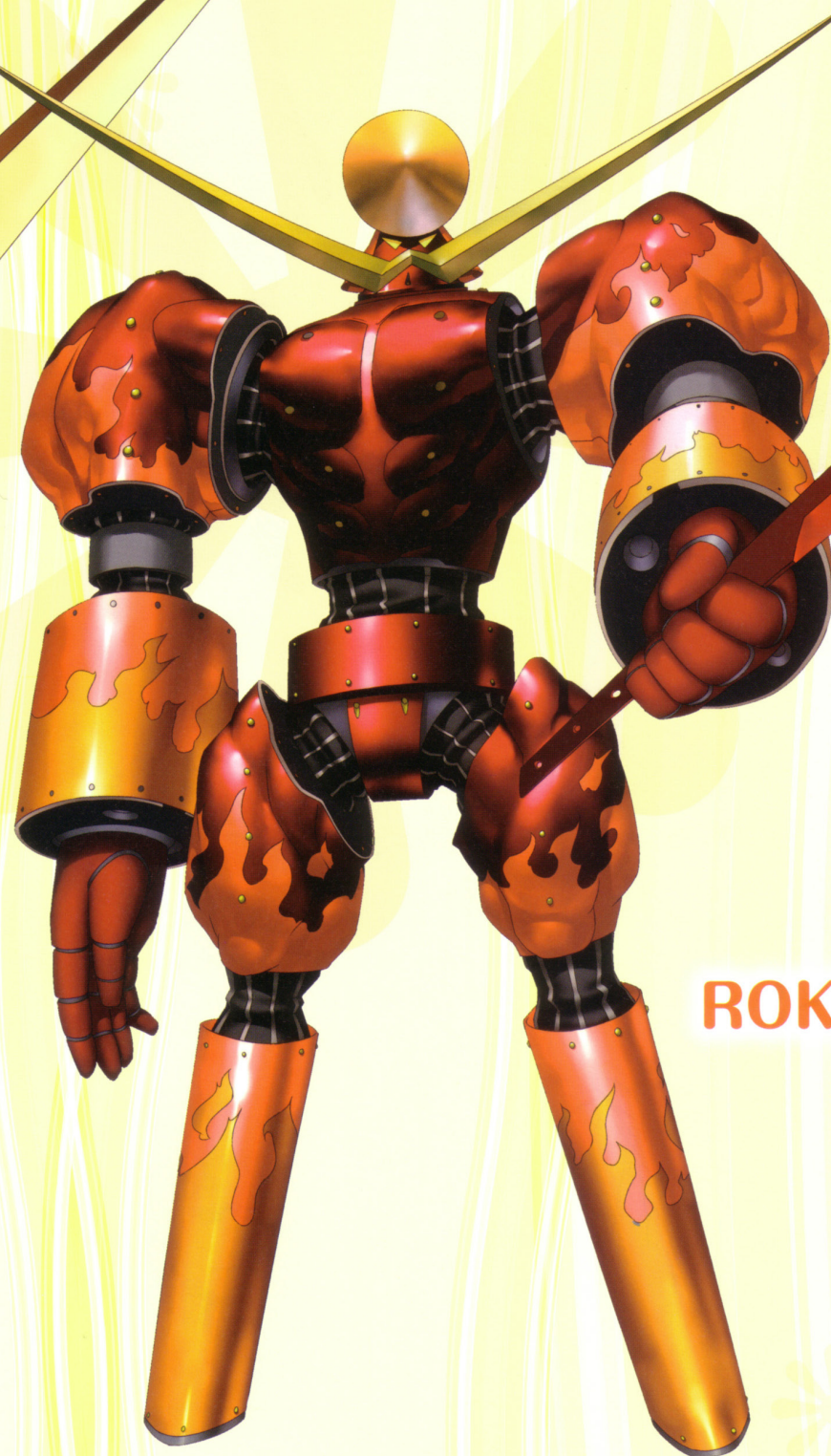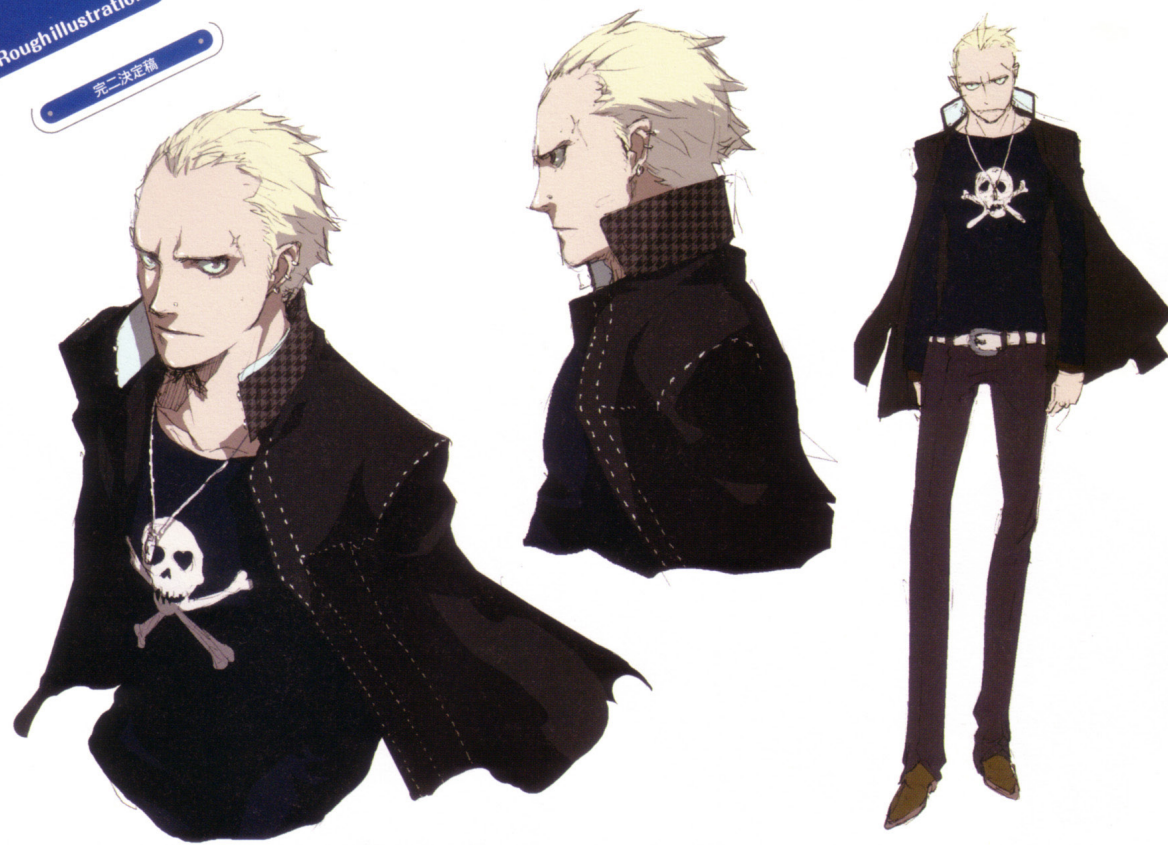
完二初期デザイン案2
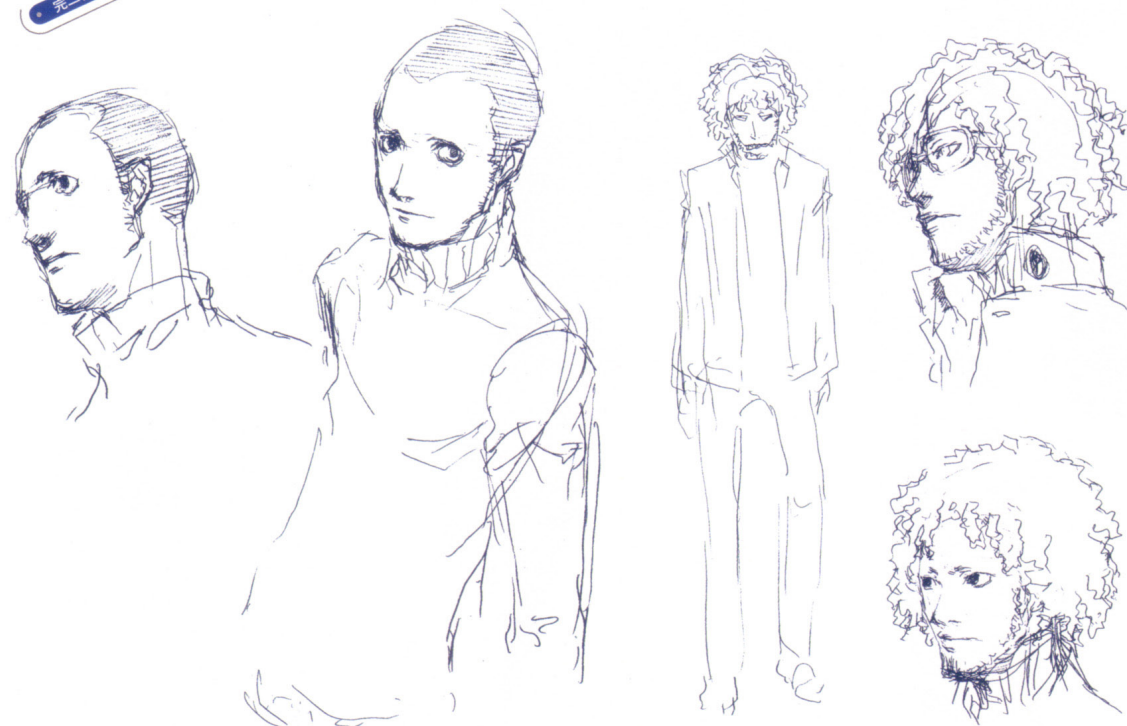
完二初期デザイン案1

完二初期デザイン案3
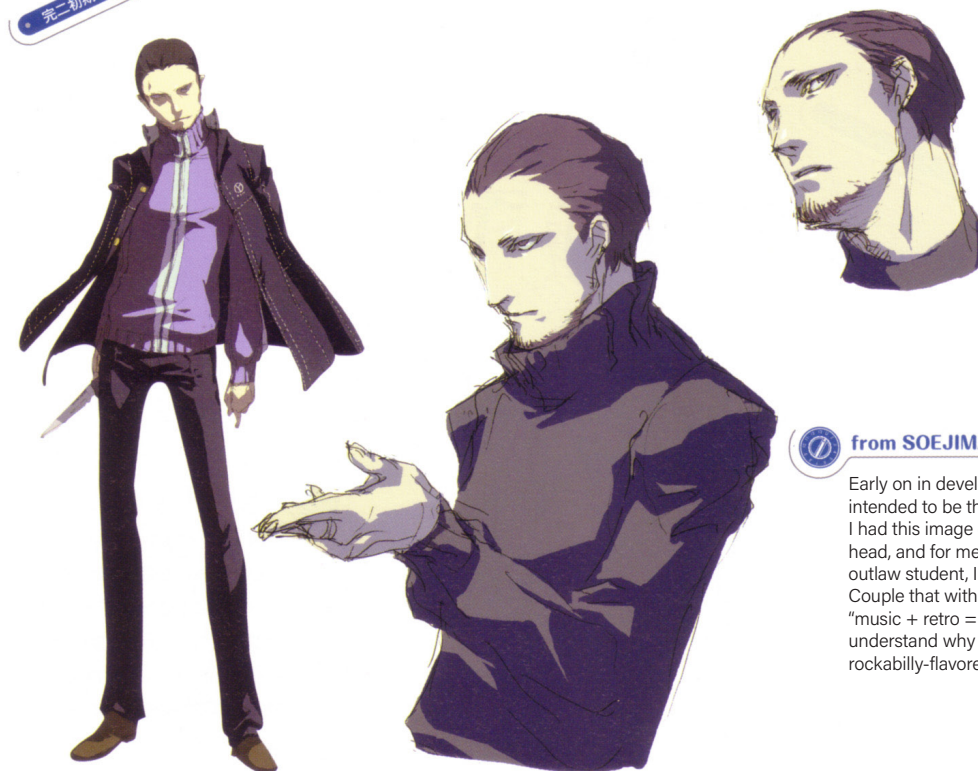
from SOEJIMA

Early on in development, Kanji was intended to be the delinquent senior. I had this image of an outlaw in my head, and for me, when I think of an outlaw student, I think of a musician. Couple that with my personal formula of "music + retro = rockabilly", and you'll understand why I kept pushing these rockabilly-flavored designed for Kanji.

タケミカヅチ決定稿

タケミカヅチ初期デザイン姿

ドクロパターン

ロクテンマオウ決定稿

The real Rokuten Maoh

Additional parts

Please make the arms simple tubes instead of motors. We don't need the red and blue cables.
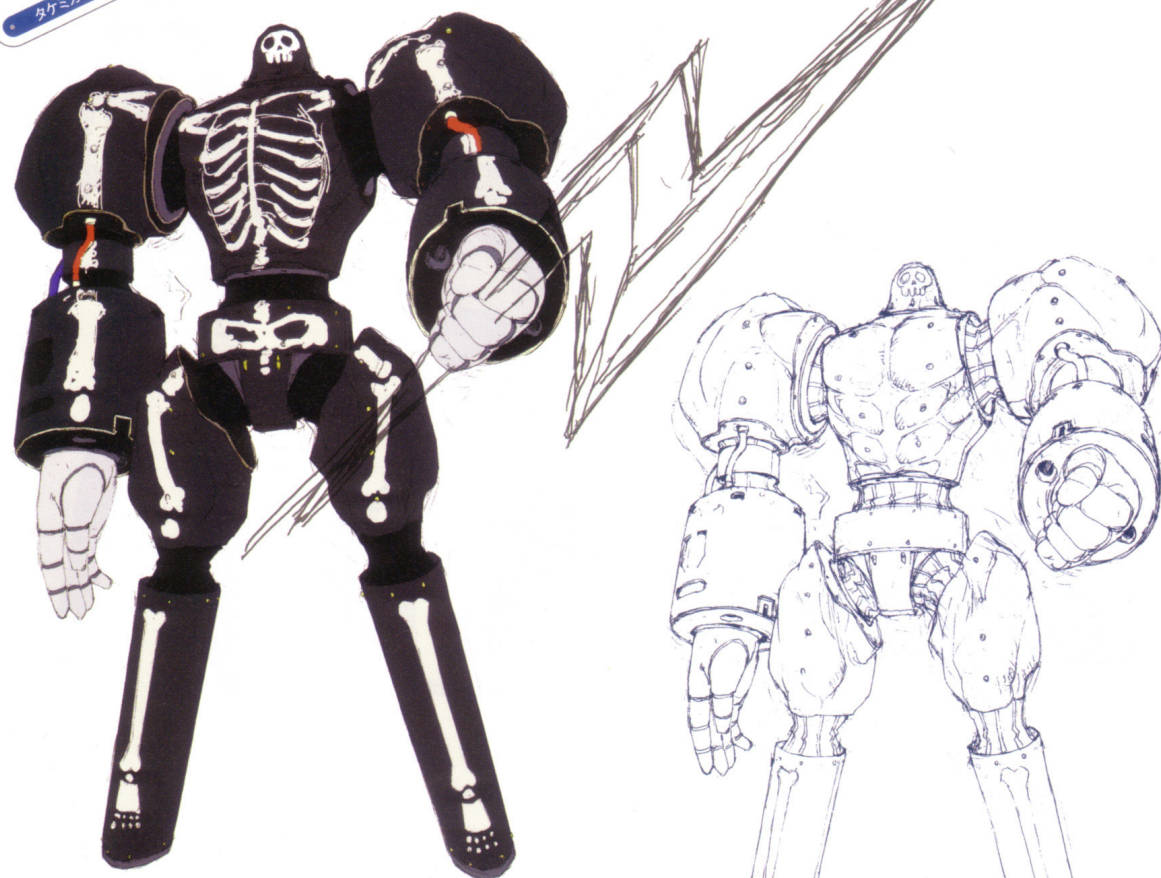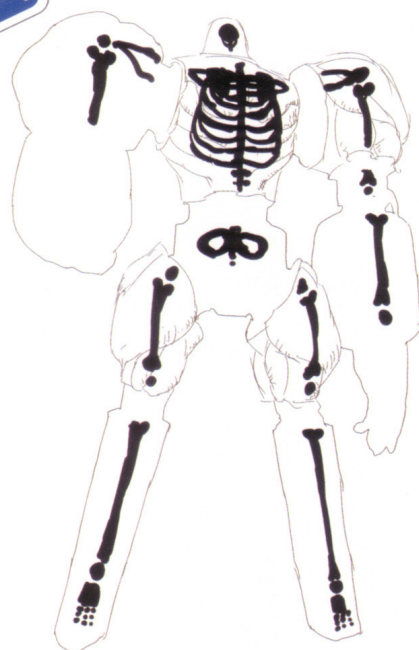
from SOEJIMA

I have this personal rule that states, "a Persona must be a humanoid on the inside." I know Take-Mikazuchi looks like a robot, but he's really not. If you look closely at his joints, you will see that they are quite organic.

Teddie

With regard to the contents of Teddie's suit, we had initially planned on having a beautiful girl pop out because we thought that would offer the biggest, and therefore most fun surprise.

The decision to use a bear for Teddie's external appearance is rooted in Director Hashino's instructions to make Teddie "an adorable character with a visual appeal that everyone will love". I don't have any actual scientific data to back this up, but according to Director Hashino, "Cute equals something big and fluffy that can envelop you with a sense of acceptance." Based on that, I figured we should go with a bear. (laughs) Teddie was supposed to be a pretty loose and easy character, but you never really know where a design journey is going to take you, and that was certainly the case with Teddie. We eventually arrived at a slightly dated design based on retro toys like those old celluloid dolls. Generally speaking, the characters that remain in people's hearts the longest are those whose designs are simple and delicately refined. The opposite approach would be to add era-specific trademarks or cues, resulting in what feels like a dated design. I intentionally went with the latter route for Teddie, using two main colors and buttons that get smaller as they go down. The shape of Teddie's head is reminiscent of an astronaut's helmet. What I was trying to

express with Teddie's design was a sort of retro future, an era of the recent past when genuine hope was something shared by all. With regard to the contents of Teddie's suit, we had initially planned on having a beautiful girl pop out because we thought that would offer the biggest, and therefore most fun surprise. When we switched Naoto into a female character, however, that resulted in us changing our minds about the human inside Teddie. My new orders were to create a "sparklingly beautiful young man" to be inside Teddie, so that's what I did. The haircut I gave him is known as the "firecut" in the manga industry, and that alone kind of makes him look like he belongs in the fantasy genre. His shimmering golden hair and sparkling blue eyes are just part of the "beautiful young man" stereotype, and are not meant to suggest anything about his heritage or nationality.

Kintoki-Douji's design was based on a Kintaro toy. To maintain the same "retro toy" vibe that Teddie has, Kintoki-Douji has a blue vinyl cape. The missile carried by Kintoki-Douji is supposed to be sort of a joke, as the missile is called the tomahawk, and Kintaro

was known to carry around an axe. The symbols on his belly are actually the letters "Au", which is also a little joke, as "Au" is th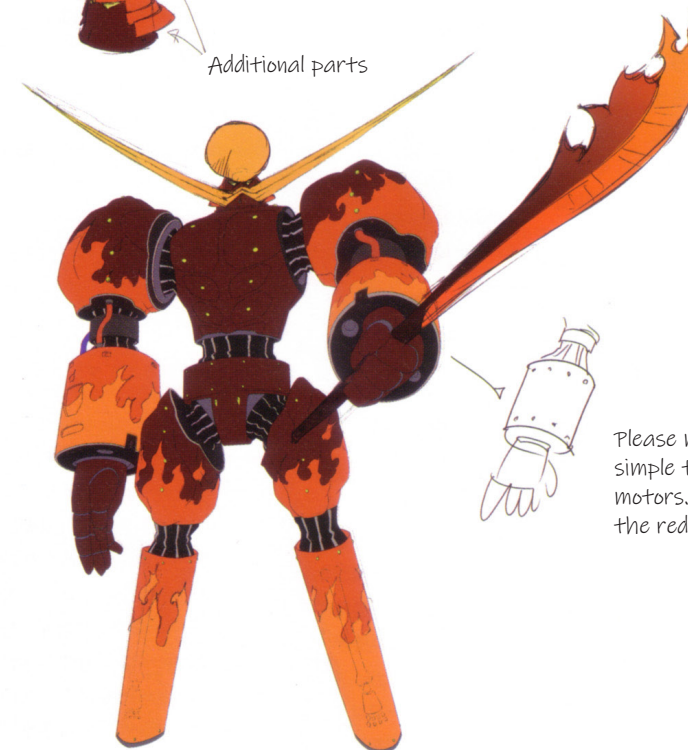e symbol for gold on the periodic table, and the "Kin" in "Kintaro" means gold in Japanese. When I first submitted this design, a few of the staff members shook their heads, saying, "It's not right for a design to be based on stupid jokes." But I'm not the one making the stupid jokes, it's all Teddie. (laughs) Teddie's Persona constantly spouts puns and jokes, so it seemed only right that its physical appearance would also contain silly bits in its physical appearance. Kamui's design was based on Kim-un Kamuy, the Ainu tribe's god of bears... though the only part of the design that really has a bear flavor to it is the claws. The Ainu actually have a ceremony for worshipping Kim-un Kamuy, which involves shooting a baby bear to death with arrows. I'm not sure why they would kill a baby bear to worship the god of bears, but regardless, I used an actual missile dubbed "Arrow" as the model for the thing sticking into Kamui.

[Soejima]

Cut in

Costume & Face

Name: **Teddie**
Gender: **Male? / Male**
Date of Birth: **I dunno**
Age: **I dunno**
Height: **I dunno / 170cm (human form)**
Weight: **I dunno / 55kg (human form)**
Blood Type: **I dunno**

クマ/通常

クマ/笑顔

クマ/怒り

クマ/悲哀

クマ/照れ

クマ/驚き

クマ／焦り

クマ・ペラペラ／気合い

クマ・ペラペラ／ウゲーッ

クマ・ペラペラ／凹み

もう一人のクマ／通常

クマダ・着ぐるみ／笑顔

クマダ・私服／通常

クマダ・私服／怒り

クマダ・バイト着／凹み

クマダ・浴衣・天城屋旅館／悲装

クマダ・半裸・雪天風呂／驚き

クマダ・女装・文化祭／笑顔
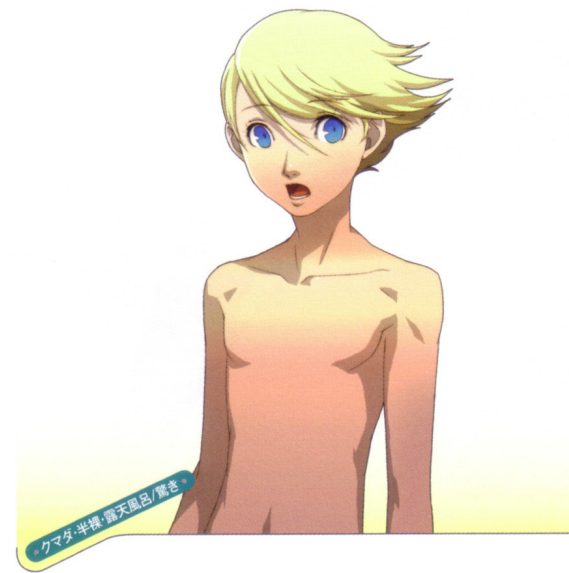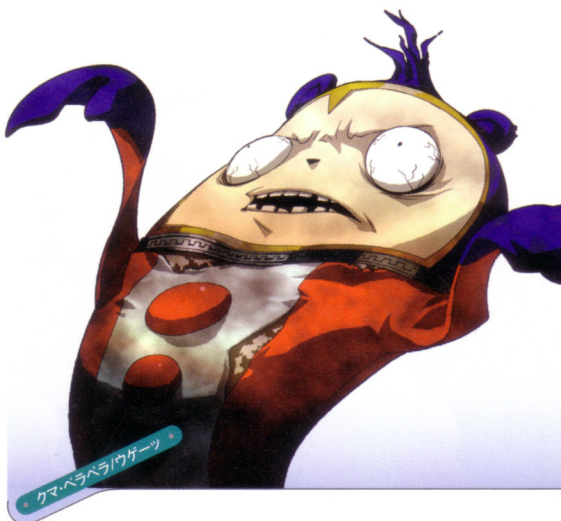
PERSONA
KINTOKIDOUJI
《キントキドウジ》

PERSONA
KAMUI
《カムイ》

クマ設定原画

クマ初期デザイン案-1

rawr!

クマ初期デザイン案-2
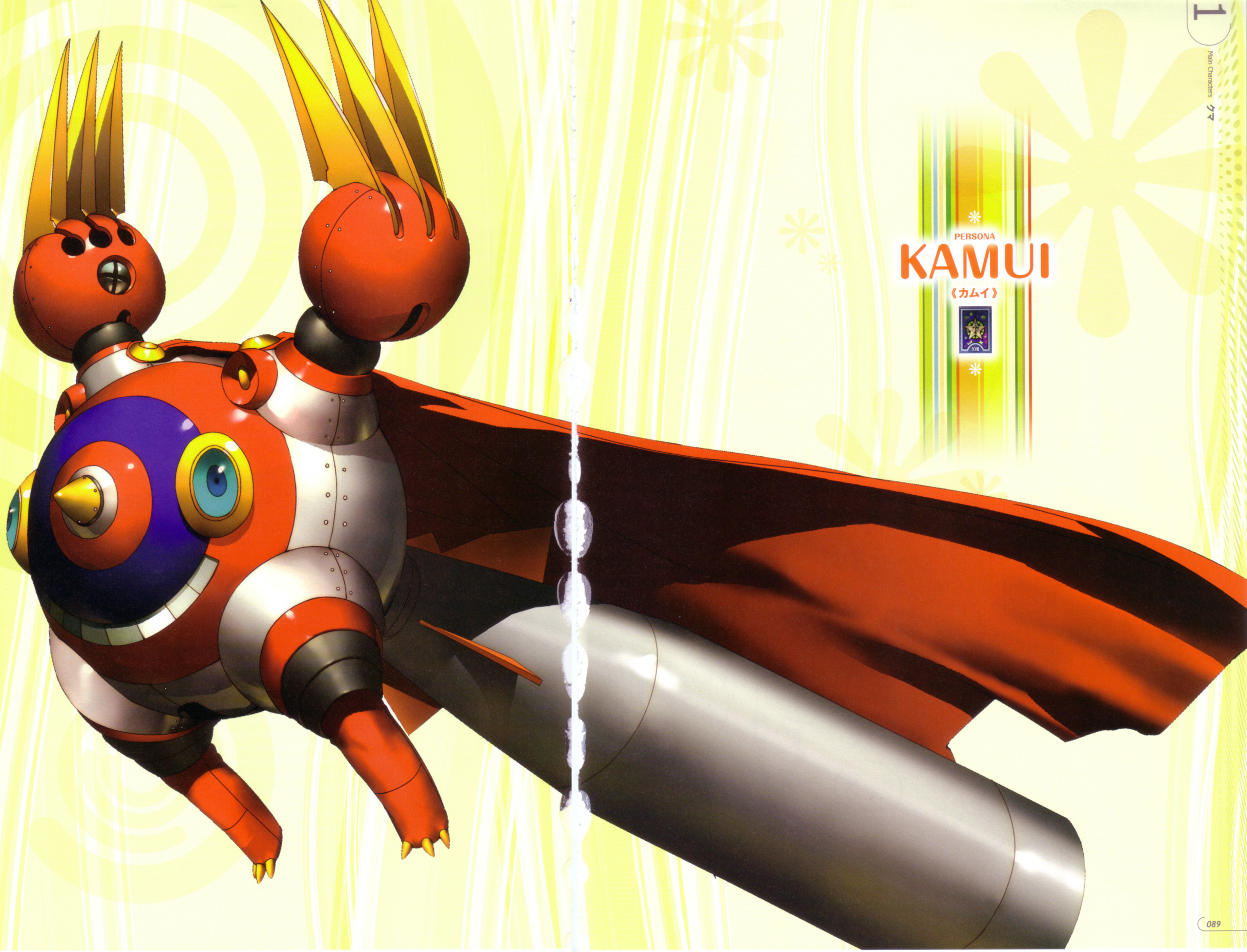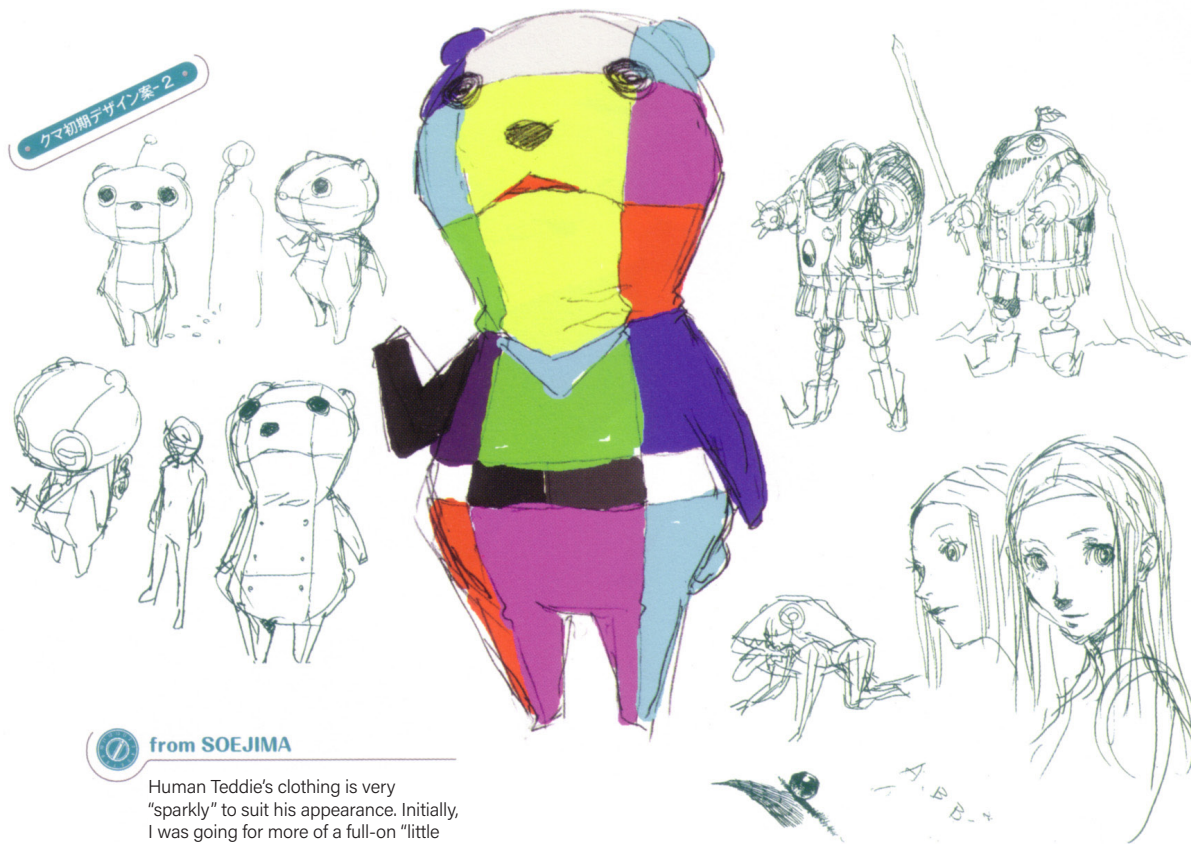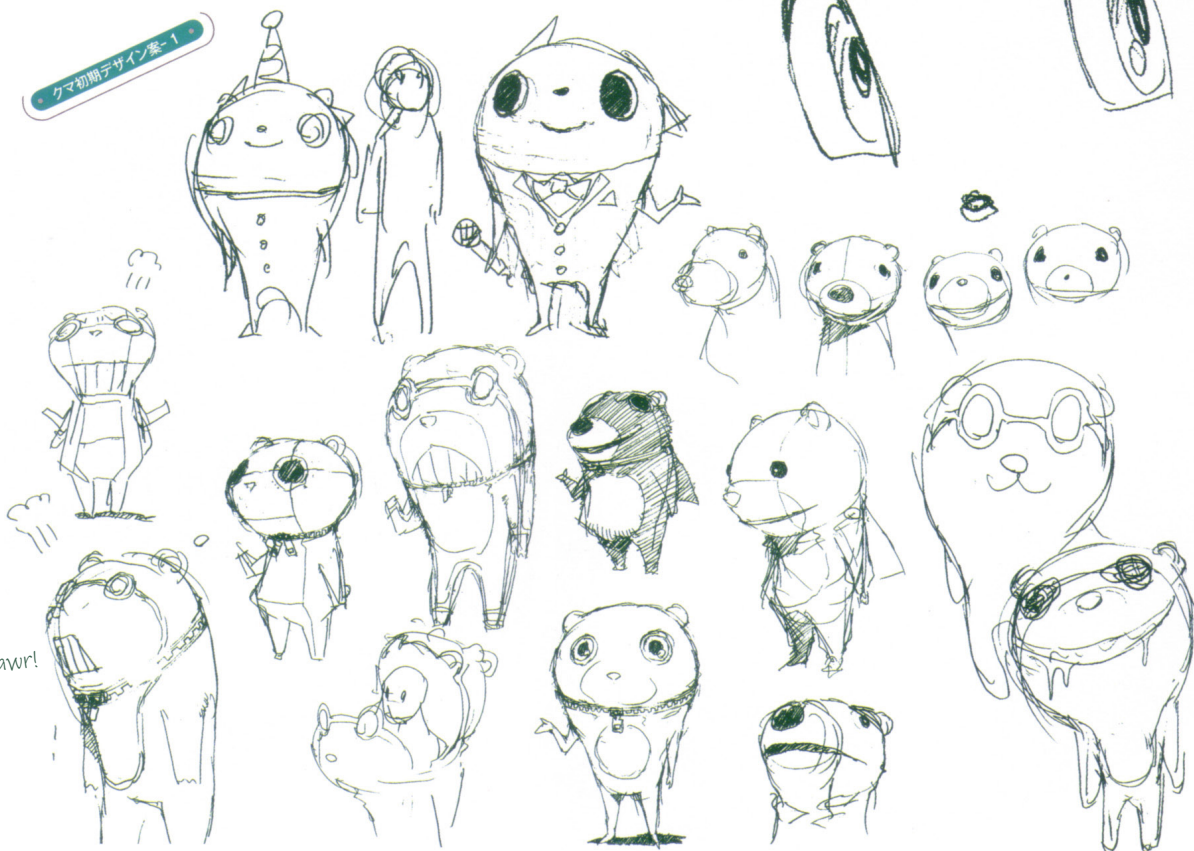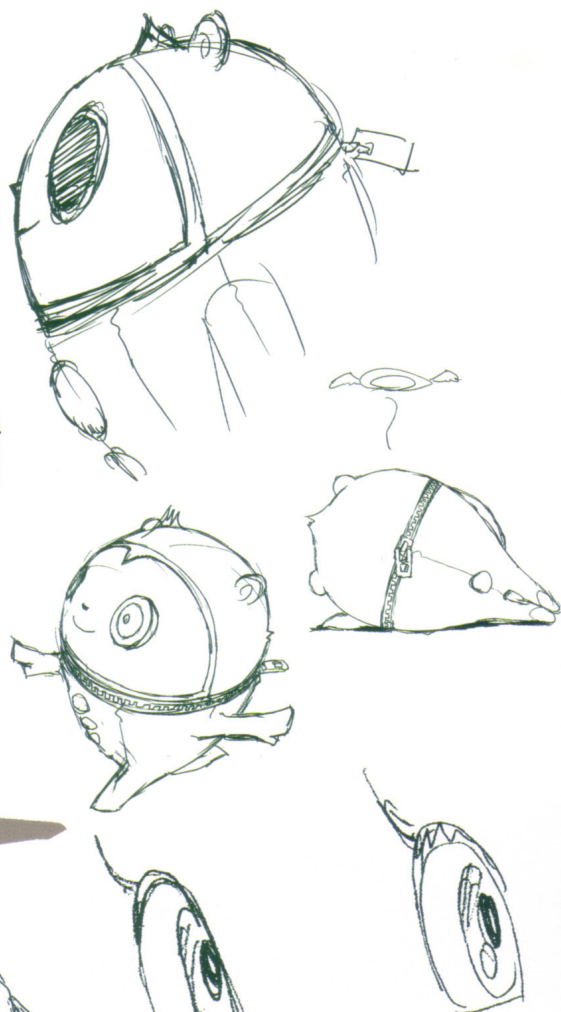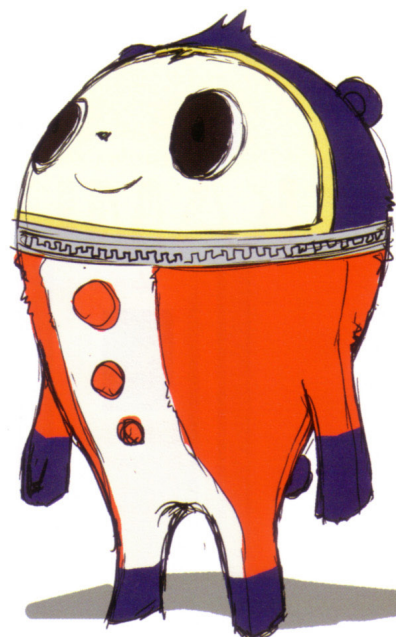
from SOEJIMA

Human Teddie's clothing is very "sparkly" to suit his appearance. Initially, I was going for more of a full-on "little boy" style, but in the end we went with something that matched his "prince" image. There are two reasons Costume Teddie and Human Teddie don't share any design elements; because they are two separate entities, and because we just thought that would make for a much more entertaining surprise.

クマ設定原画
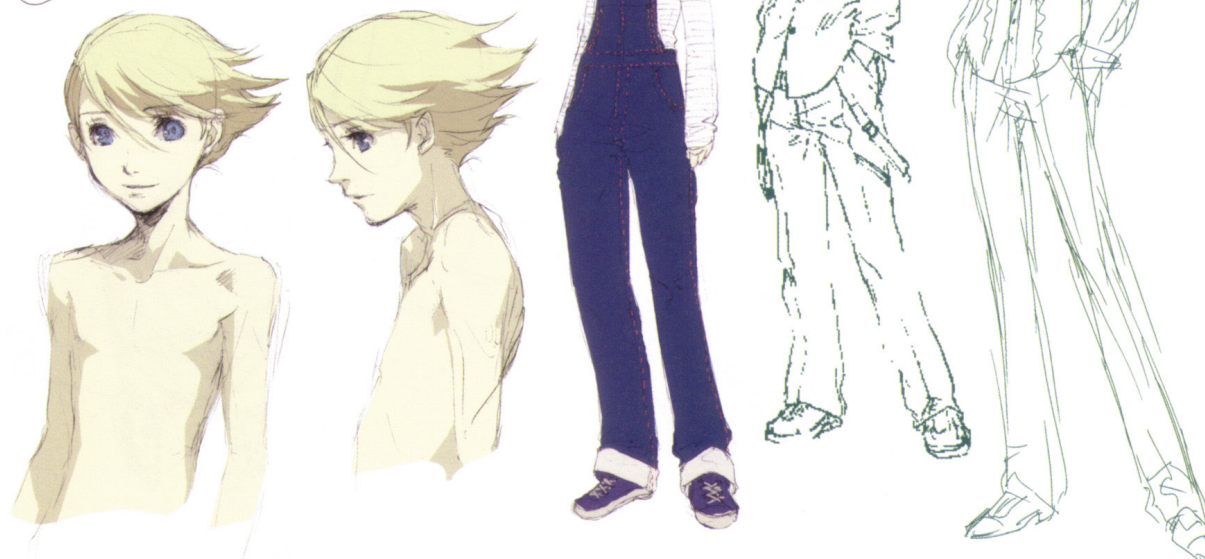
キントキドウジ設定原画

Kintoki-Douji

キントキドウジ初期デザイン案

カムイ設定原画

Teddie is technically a costume, but due to the positioning of the arms and legs, a person wouldn't really be able to wear him. (laughs) I mentioned something about my personal rule on one of Take-Mikazuchi's pages, but both Teddie and Kintoki-Douji are exceptions to my rule, as neither is designed to fit a human inside.

Deform it for this particular visual balance.

mobile

inner side

outer side

Kamui

Rise Kujikawa

But then it occurred to me that idols are a product of fantasy, so pigtails would be a great way to symbolize that.

At first, I was planning to make Rise into a classic female bully, and this was an idea I randomly came up with purely on my own. With the setting being a rural town and the design theme being retro, I thought it would be great to have a female bully with a long skirt wielding a shinai or chain. But when it was decided that Kanji's character was to be "the delinquent", we also started rethinking Rise's combat role. Once Rise was settled into a supportive role, I knew I had to change my design direction. I pondered what kind of character the players would want to be supported by, and an idol seemed like the right answer. Just as I was shifting gears into idol mode, Director Hashino suggested that I make her "a pretty girl with an inner conflict". This concept for a cute but emotionally complex idol was the foundation for Rise's design.

The toughest decision I had to make was with regard to Rise's hairstyle. I started off with a graceful, long, and straight hairstyle, but that lacked the slight "manufactured image" quality that I wanted Rise to have. Idols are an illusion of sorts, so I wanted her appearance to seem fake to a certain degree. I always lay down a few personal rules whenever I work on a project, and one of my "Persona 4" rules was that I wouldn't cross the line into a realm of outlandish fiction... so heterochromia was pretty much out of the question. (laughs) Along the same lines, I figured that pigtails were something that you really only see on television, so I discounted that idea as well. But then it occurred to me that idols are a product of fantasy, so pigtails would be a great way to symbolize that. Another element that I put a lot of thought into was her eyes. If I made her irises too large, she would look too innocent and simple to have two sides to her character. I tried to strike a good balance between her iris and sclera in order to make it believable that there might be another side to this cute

idol. As a side note, I also tried to give her hair a lot of volume, as I felt that would add to her "fake" image.

Himiko's body is the only thing that is in line with Rise's idea of what the historical figure looked like, while the head is totally an antenna. Historically, it is said that Himiko ruled over her lands with shamanic powers, and I thought the antenna would be a good modern representation of those powers. The goggles are like Himiko's crown, and Rise wears them in order to monitor the others. The antenna's honeycomb pattern is a reference to the shamanic practice of divination through turtle shells. Himiko can only function when Rise is wearing the goggles, so she was not designed as a Persona who directly joins battles. This is also reflected in Himiko's long dress, which would be difficult to maneuver in. Since Kanzeon is capable of gathering more information than Himiko, I added additional layers to her antenna.

[Soejima]

Name: **Rise Kujikawa**
Gender: **Female**
Date of Birth: **June 1, 1995 (Gemini)**
Age: **15 (16)**
Height: **155cm (at end of career)**
Weight: **41kg (at end of career)**
Blood Type: **AB**

制服・冬/通常

制服・夏/照れ

戦闘時・冬/通常

戦闘時・夏/苦痛

私服・冬/怒り

私服・夏/苦悩

制服・夏/酔い笑顔

水着/笑顔

割烹着/驚き

浴衣・夏祭り/笑顔

タオル巻き・露天風呂/驚き

制服・夏/酔い

割烹着/悲哀

もう一人のりせ/笑み

もう一人のりせ/怒り

PERSONA
HIMIKO
《ヒミコ》

PERSONA
KANZEON
《カンゼオン》

りせ決定稿ラフ

りせ初期デザイン案1

りせ初期デザイン案2

りせ初期デザイン案3
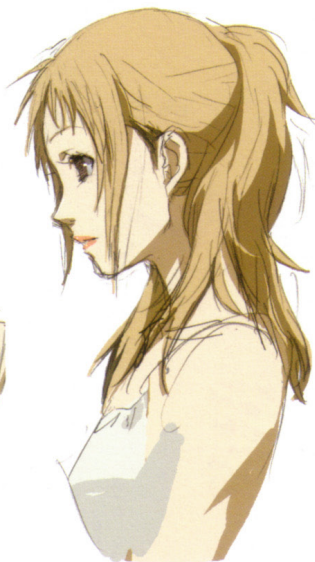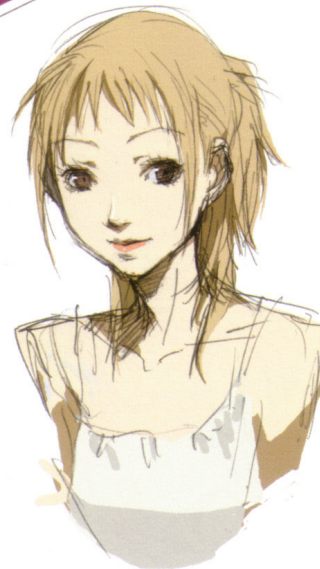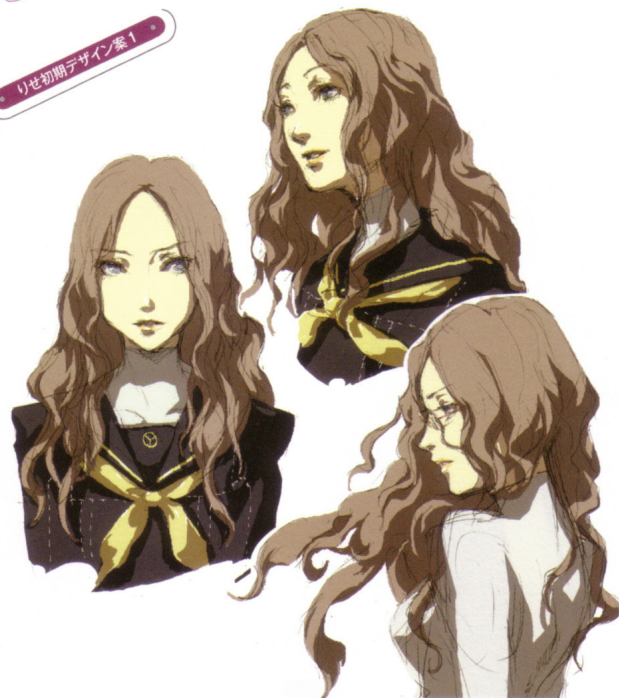
from SOEJIMA

Early on, I was going to design Rise as a bully character, so a lot of the early drawings show a more intimidating Rise. (laughs) When I started designing Rise as an idol, I looked to real life idols for inspiration, particularly newer idols that still seemed to be straddling the line between the life of a star and that of a civilian.
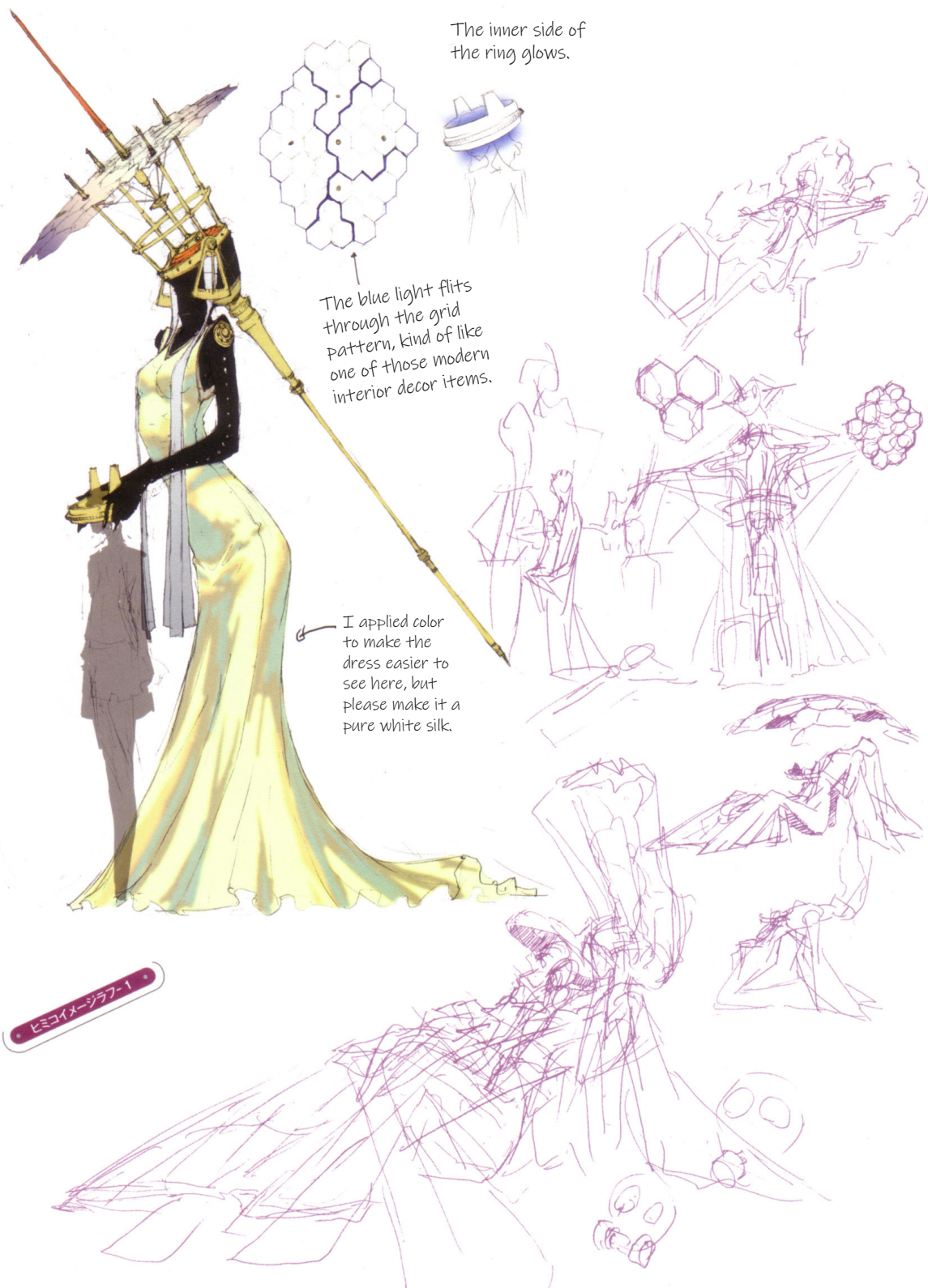
ヒミコ決定稿

The inner side of
the ring glows.

The blue light flits
through the grid
pattern, kind of like
one of those modern
interior decor items.

I applied color
to make the
dress easier to
see here, but
please make it a
pure white silk.

ヒミコイメージラフ1

ヒミコイメージラフ2

カンゼオン決定稿

Naoto Shirogane

The Naoto on the cover of this book was drawn as a female character, so you can see that she does have breasts.

Naoto was initially planned to be a male character, but was changed to female during the course of development, so all of my early design drafts depict her as a male. Naoto was designed to be a "young detective boy", and to me, that meant he needed a very particular hat. Once I finished designing her and put the hat on her, I was like, "Yep, that there's a young detective boy." (laughs) Naoto's technically a high school student, so she's not really at an age that she could be considered a boy (back when she was still a he, that is), but due to the "young detective boy" concept, I did design her to look very young for her age.

Though it was unintentional, Naoto shares a lot of design elements with the "Persona 3" protagonist, and handsome, thin-framed, mysterious boys tend to make for popular characters, so I knew early on that Naoto would be popular with the players.

Now that most players have completed the game and learned that Naoto is actually a female, my drawings of her have changed dramatically. For the initial package art and retailer bonus items, I had to draw Naoto as a

male character because the game had only just been released. Despite my best efforts, though, I was told that people figured out that Naoto is actually a female quite early due to the fact that I slightly tightened her waist into a feminine form. (laughs) Now, I've been allowed to shift into a mode where I can openly draw Naoto as a female, so her mouth, eyes, and eyelashes are distinctly more feminine in my recent illustrations. The Naoto on the cover of this book was drawn as a female character, so you can see that she does have breasts. Comparing this book's cover art with some of my earlier illustrations of Naoto might prove interesting to fans of the game. Aside from the obvious gender issues, I also focused on Naoto's hat quite a bit. In particular, I angled the brim of the hat downward like those on police hats in order to further emphasize the detective concept.

Sukuna-Hikona is said to be the god upon whom the story of Issun-boshi was based, so I incorporated some visual elements of Issun-boshi into Sukuna-Hikona's design. With Issun-boshi and Naoto both being

of small stature, I wanted to use Sukuna-Hikona to represent that size doesn't determine all. As with Naoto, I dressed Sukuna-Hikona in clothes that are stereotypically associated with young detective boys, though they were more heavily influenced by well-known boy characters from retro animes. This helped to further associate Sukuna-Hikona with Naoto herself, who is kind of reminiscent of the classic anime boy heroes who are easily captured by the enemy, yet manage to pull out the heroics in the end despite their young age and small size. For Yamato Takeru's design, I wanted to focus more on the myth about him dressing as a housemaid in order to infiltrate the enemy. In order to stick to the mythology theme, I thought about dressing him in noble or royal attire, but I quickly changed my mind. My train of thought kind of went like this: Naoto = pretty cross-dressing girl = Takarazuka Revue = The Rose of Versailles... and that's how Yamato Takeru's design came to be what it is today. (laughs)

[Soejima]

Name: **Naoto Shirogane**
Gender: **Female**
Date of Birth: **April 27, 1995 (Taurus)**
Age: **15 (16)**
Height: **152cm**
Weight: **This is an invasion of privacy!**
Blood Type: **B (Rh-)**

制服・冬/通常

制服・夏/通常

制服・冬/通常

制服・夏/笑顔

戦闘時・冬/怒り

戦闘時・夏/苦痛

私服·冬/悲哀

私服·夏/驚き

制服·冬/困り照れ

もう一人の直斗/悲哀

制服·冬/呆れ

タオル巻き·露天風呂/困り照れ

もう一人の直斗/通常

私服·夏/照れ驚き

私服·冬/照れ

もう一人の直斗/泣き顔

もう一人の直斗/怒り
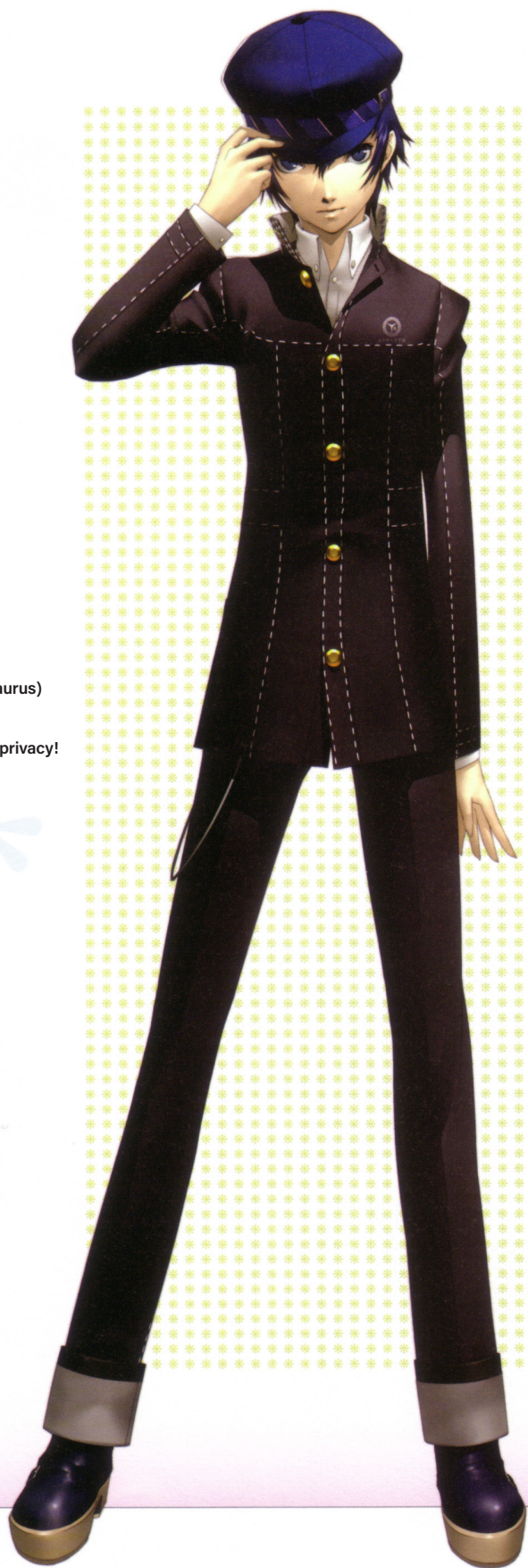
PERSONA
YAMATOTAKERU
《ヤマトタケル》
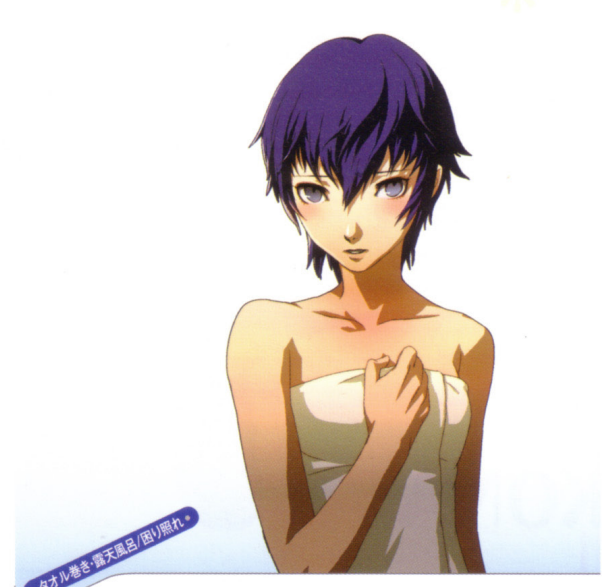
PERSONA
SUKUNAHIKONA
《スクナヒコナ》

Rough Illustration

直斗決定稿

Brim angle reference

直斗初期デザイン案2

スクナヒコナ設定原画

Stitching

These parts flutter

ヤマトタケル設定原画
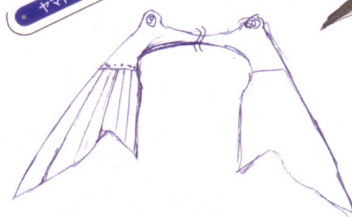
Katana and sheath are the same as the ones used by Amaterasu

直斗初期デザイン案1

ヤマトタケルデザイン案

from SOEJIMA

The original description for Naoto that I was working from was "a short and pretty young man", so even the early drafts of Naoto look a bit feminine. As a result, I didn't need to do a major design overhaul when we decided to switch the character's gender.

from SOEJIMA

Shorts are usually worn over bare legs, but due to another one of my personal rules which states, "the skin of the person inside a Persona shall not be exposed", I had to put Sukuna-Hikona and Yamato Takeru in full-body tights. If you could look under their masks, you'd see that the tights cover their entire body, including the head and face.

Nanako Dojima

Having "a character who will be loved" as the mandatory design concept made for a difficult design process.

Nanako is like a little sister to the Protagonist, so like the Protagonist, I tried to make her universally appealing. In fact, it wasn't enough that I try, since we already knew Nanako would get kidnapped during the course of the game. I needed the players to like her, because if their reaction to her abduction was, "Good riddance," or something along those lines, we'd be in big trouble. Having "a character who will be loved" as the mandatory design concept made for a difficult design process. What kind of little sister character could avoid being hated by the players? Tricky, to say the least.

The key points to Nanako's design were her flat, prominent eyebrows and her silently dependent gaze. I wanted her to be the kind of girl you could look at and easily see that she has something on her mind. I was also quite careful with her general appearance, as I knew it wouldn't serve the character well if I made her overly pathetic or helpless to the point that it felt like I was forcing the player to sympathize with her. I didn't want the player to pity her, I wanted them to care about her. I curled the ends of her hair just a bit to give her a touch of style, since straight, limp pigtails would have been too boring. As for her clothes being rather bland, that's probably because Ryotaro bought them for her at Junes. (laughs) [Soejima]

Name: **Nanako Dojima**
Gender: **Female**
Date of Birth: **October 4, 2004 (Libra)**
Age: **6 (7)**
Height: **122cm**
Weight: **21kg**
Blood Type: **O**

冬服/通常

冬服/驚き

冬服/照れ

浴衣·夏祭り/通常

タオル巻き·露天風呂/笑顔

入院着/無表情

入院着/微笑み

夏服/怒り

夏服/悲哀

入院着/苦痛

入院着/弱苦痛

菜々子初期デザイン案

Nanako

The version of Nanako with the jeans and baseball cap looks like she's so independent that she might just run away from home and never come back. The version of her with long hair, on the other hand, looks like she was raised as a sheltered princess. We couldn't have her being a runaway, and there's no way she could have had a "sheltered princess" upbringing with her home situation being what it is, so we picked the design you see here.
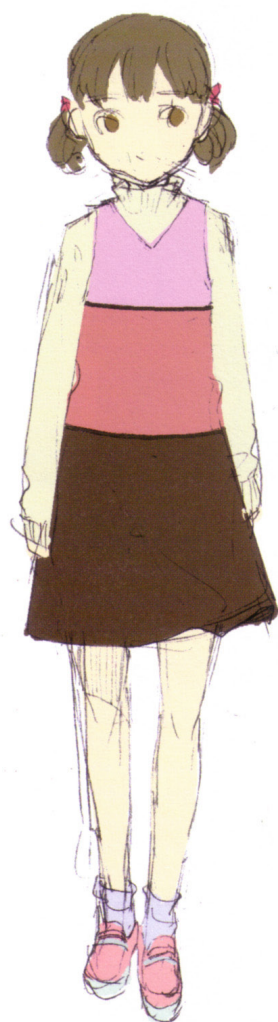
Ryotaro Dojima

I wanted to express the tragedy of a middle-aged single father through Ryotaro's design.

Designing Ryotaro started with figuring out the emotional distance he would maintain when interacting with Nanako and the Protagonist. The emotional walls and distances we set for ourselves tend to be reflected in our faces, so after discussing the details with Director Hashino, we created this somewhat expressionless face for Ryotaro. I wanted to express the tragedy of a middle-aged single father through Ryotaro's design. His constant five o'clock shadow and crooked necktie are testaments to the struggle he faces in trying to balance his domestic and professional lives. I was hoping this perpetual display of exhaustion would help convey a bit of his sorrow. This design also happened to be perfectly appropriate for the fact that Ryotaro usually shows up in the game after he's gotten off from work. The parts I focused on most with Ryotaro's design were his eyes and eyebrows, as I wanted these features to express his honesty, integrity, and kindness. Nanako and Ryotaro are related by blood, but I intentionally did not give them any shared design elements because, as far as I was concerned, Nanako closely resembles her deceased mother. If Nanako looked like her father, I felt that they would soon forget her mother. I wanted to put Ryotaro in a situation where he would be reminded of his beloved wife every time he looked at his daughter.
[Soejima]

Main CG

Name: **Ryotaro Dojima**
Gender: **Male**
Date of Birth: **May 16, 1969 (Taurus)**
Age: **42 (43)**
Height: **179cm**
Weight: **66kg**
Blood Type: **O**

スーツ/通常

スーツ/驚き

スーツ/くわえ煙草

スーツ/怒り

スーツ/悲哀

スーツ/笑顔

スーツ/酔い

スーツ/酔い怒り

入院着/苦痛

入院着/悲哀
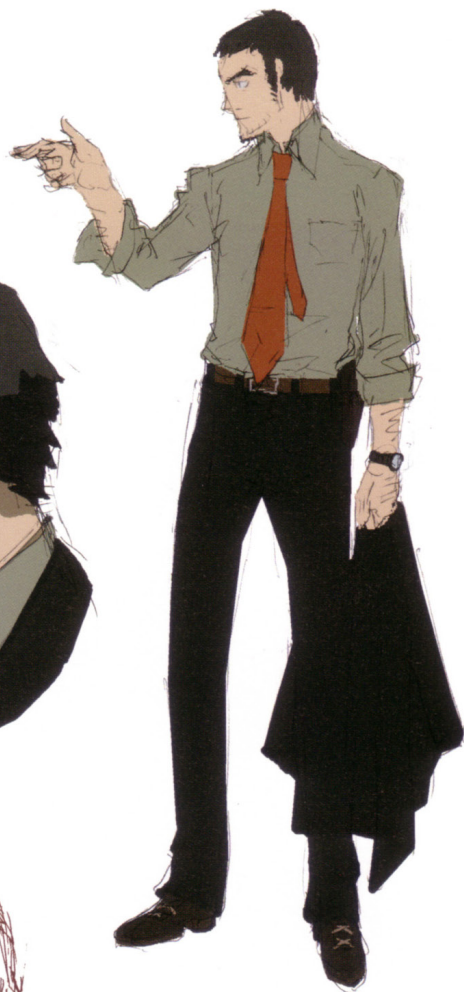
堂島決定稿

堂島初期デザイン案

堂島決定稿着彩前

from SOEJIMA

I made quite a few sketches while talking to Director Hashino about potential ideas for Ryotaro. The reason these early buzz-cut versions of Ryotaro got tossed was because a few of the staff members commented, "With this haircut, it's hard to believe he's the one who puts people in jail. It looks more like he's just getting into or out of jail himself."
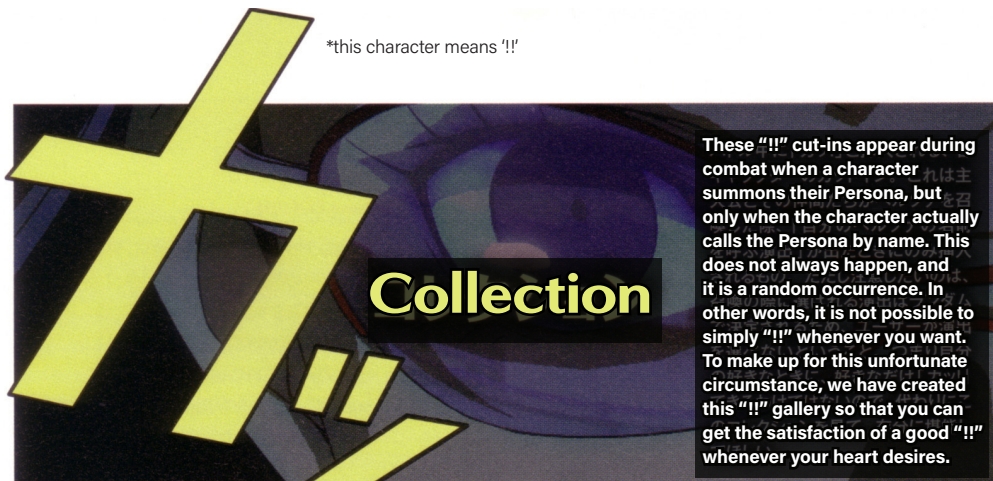
カッ Collection

These "!!" cut-ins appear during combat when a character summons their Persona, but only when the character actually calls the Persona by name. This does not always happen, and it is a random occurrence. In other words, it is not possible to simply "!!" whenever you want. To make up for this unfortunate circumstance, we have created this "!!" gallery so that you can get the satisfaction of a good "!!" whenever your heart desires.

カッ **Yosuke Hanamura**

カッ **Chie Satonaka**

カッ **Yukiko Amagi**

カッ **Kanji Tatsumi**

カッ **Teddie**

カッ **Naoto Shirogane**

カッ **Protagonist**

Chapter 2
*
Sub Characters

Margaret

Margaret is a resident of the Velvet Room, and arrived in pursuit of her younger sister Elizabeth. Margaret has taken Elizabeth's place as Igor's assistant. Always calm and logical, Margaret rarely shows any emotion. Interactions with Margaret will establish the Empress Arcana Social Link.

Main CG

Costume&Face

【笑顔】　【通常】

初期デザイン案

決定稿

from SOEJIMA

Initially, we were going to use Elizabeth from "Persona 3" for "Persona 4" as well, but decided against it so as to give the story and events of "Persona 3" more significance. This is why Elizabeth was included in these early designs. Despite being sisters, these two assistants couldn't be more different. Since Margaret is the older sister, I gave her the appeal of a mature older woman. I gave her a short skirt and clothes that would be easy to move around in because I knew she might need to fight. I was hoping the stern expression on her face would make players think twice about taking her on. As far as modeling goes, Margaret is one of my favorite characters.

Fox

*This mysterious fox has taken up residence at Tatsuhime Shrine. She hopes that granting people's wishes will inspire them to put more money in the shrine's donation box. In the Midnight Channel, the fox can restore the party's SP in exchange for money. Helping the fox with her tasks will establish the Hermit Arcana Social Link.

Main CG

Rough draft
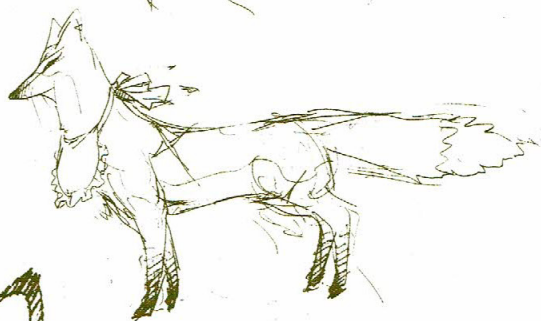
Early design ideas

NO MOUTH.
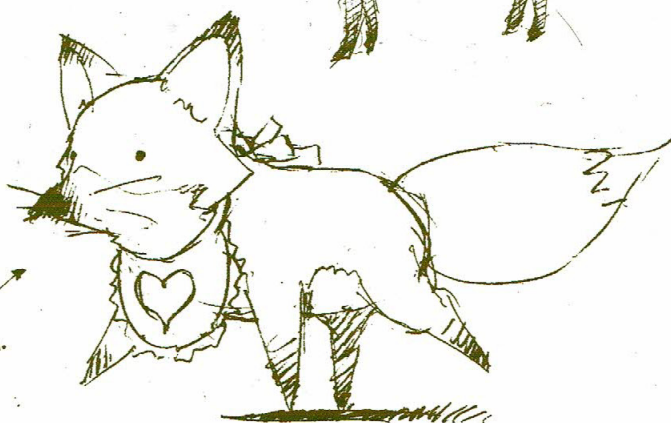
NO MOUTH.
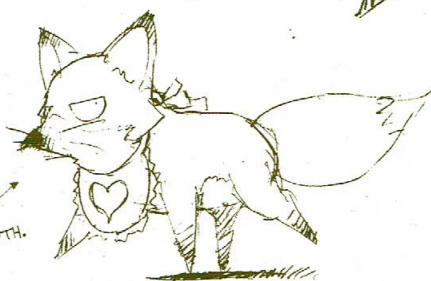
Daisuke Nagase

*A second-year student at Yasogami High School, Daisuke is best friends with Kou. Daisuke is a member of the soccer team, and though he is a naturally passionate young man, a past trauma prevents him from fully devoting himself to soccer. If the Protagonist joins the soccer team and interacts with Daisuke, the Strength Arcana Social Link will be established.

Main CG
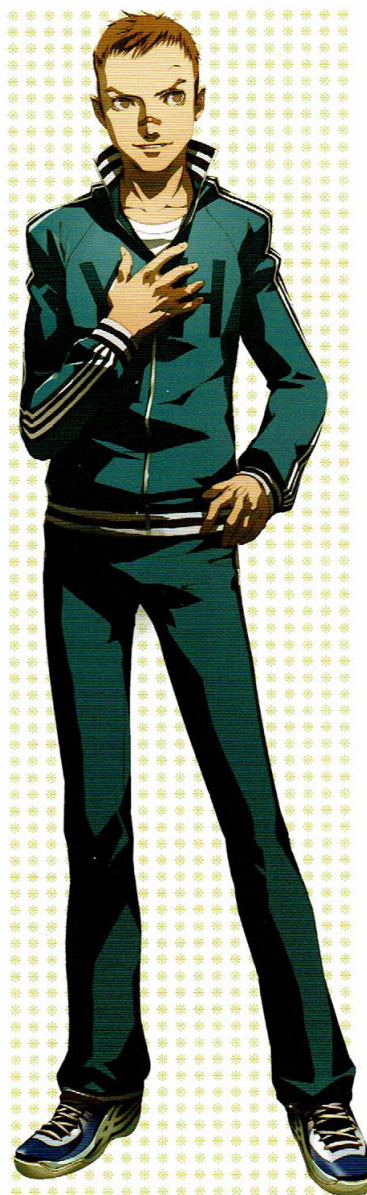
Rough draft

SOCCER CLUB
DAISUKE NAGASE

NEED TO FIX UP
FACE AND HAIR.

Early design idea

ATHLETIC GUY
WHO IS INTO
FASHION AND
STYLE.

Costume & face

Angry

Sorrowful

Exasperated surprise

Uniform / Normal

Jersey / Smile

Kou Ichijo

※ A second-year student at Yasogami High School, Kou is best friends with Daisuke. Kou is a refined and spirited student who is a member of the basketball team. He is troubled by his relationship with his adoptive family. If the Protagonist joins the basketball team and interacts with Kou, the Strength Arcana Social Link will be established.

Main CG
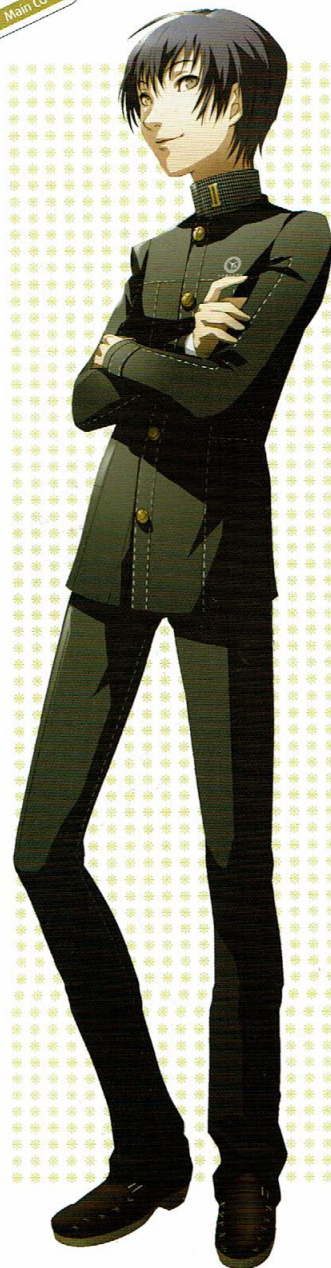
Costume & face

Winter uniform / Sorrowful

Summer uniform / Sorrowful

Summer uniform / Exasperated surprise

Casual clothes / Normal

Jersey / Sorrowful

Rough draft

Early draft idea

REFINED UPBRINGING.

FACE SHOULD LOOK MORE FELINE.

BASKETBALL CLUB KOU ICHIJO

Naoki Konishi

※ Naoki is Saki's younger brother, and is a first-year student at Yasogami High School. After his sister is killed, Naoki becomes sensitive about the way others look at and treat him. Interacting with Naoki will establish the Hanged Man Arcana Social Link.

Costume & face

Main CG

Winter uniform / Normal

Summer uniform / Smile

Winter uniform / Angry

Summer uniform / Sorrowful

Early draft idea

Rough draft

IS A PRETTY LIVELY GUY, NOT GLOOMY.

SAKI KONISHI'S YOUNGER BROTHER

Hisano Kuroda

*Hisano is an elderly woman who appears at the riverbank of the Samegawa Flood Plain every Sunday as well as on holidays. She blames herself for the death of her husband, whom she loved and was married to for a very long time. For this reason, Hisano is always seen wearing black mourning clothes, and she calls herself "Death". Interacting with Hisano will establish the Death Arcana Social Link.

Main CG

Costume & face

Mourning dress / Normal

Mourning dress / Sorrowful

Mourning dress / Smile

Final design

Early design draft

PEARL NECKLACE

Eri Minami

*Eri is the stepmother of Yuuta, a child at the daycare center where the Protagonist can work. With her husband gone on an extended business trip, Eri was left to care for her stepson alone, but has had difficulty developing a close relationship with him. The Temperance Arcana Social Link can be established by interacting with Eri.

Costume & face

Main CG

Casual clothes / Normal

Casual clothes / Sorrowful

Casual clothes / Smile

Final design draft
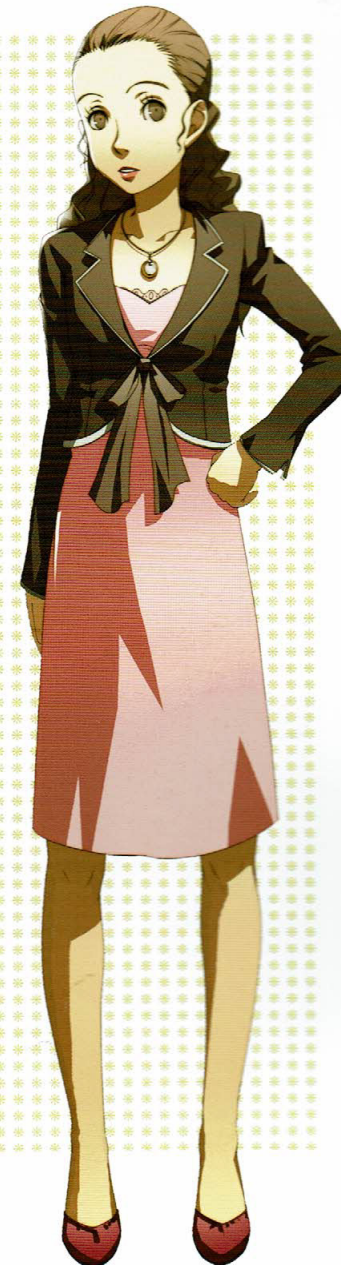
Sayoko Uehara

* Sayoko is a nurse working at the hospital in Inaba. She is a devilishly mischievous woman who enjoys flirting and toying with the Protagonist. Sayoko never used to take her job very seriously, but a certain incident changed everything for her and she became a workaholic. Interacting with Sayoko will establish the Devil Arcana Social Link.

Main CG

Costume & face

Angry

Smile

Sorrowful

Nurse uniform / Normal

Final design
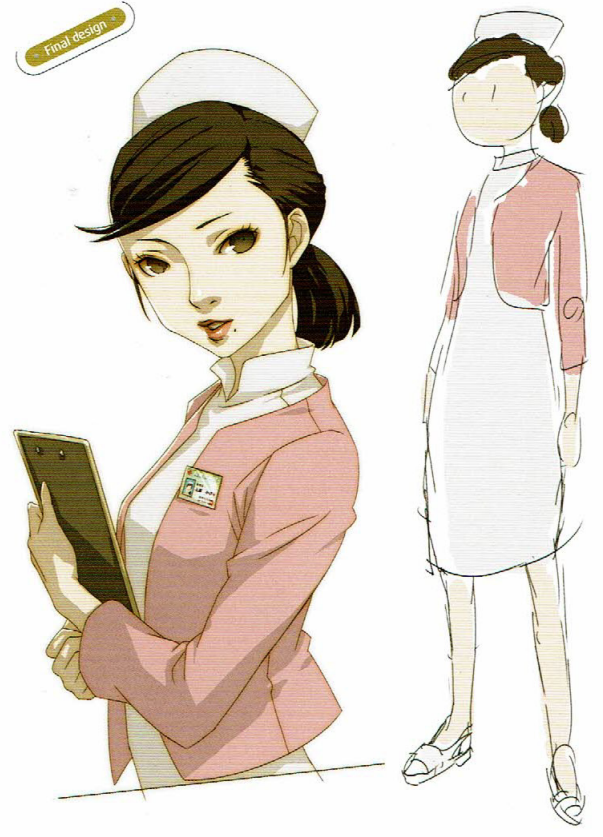
Shu Nakajima

* If the Protagonist takes on the tutoring job, Shu will be his student. Shu has a habit of judging people by their school grades and intellect. As far as Shu is concerned, his classmates are worth less than he is as human beings because their grades are not as good as his. Interacting with Shu will establish the Tower Arcana Social Link.

Costume & face

Half-smile

Smile

Sorrowful

Casual clothes / Normal

Main CG

Early design idea

HE'S NOT SICKLY, JUST NERDY.

STUDENT OF TUTORING JOB. TOWER.

Final design

Ai Ebihara

✽A second-year student at Yasogami High School, Ai is a bit of a delinquent who has skipped school one too many times. To make up for all of the school days she missed, she has been told to become the manager of one of the sports clubs. Though she agrees to these terms, Ai is not particularly excited about the idea, and does not show up for club activities often. Interacting with Ai will establish the Moon Arcana Social Link.

Main CG

Costume & face
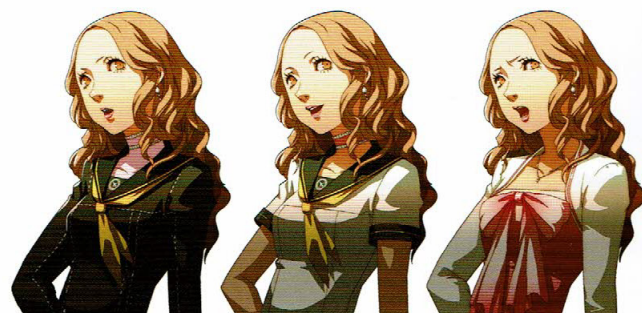
Winter uniform / Normal　　Summer uniform / Smile　　Casual clothes / Angry
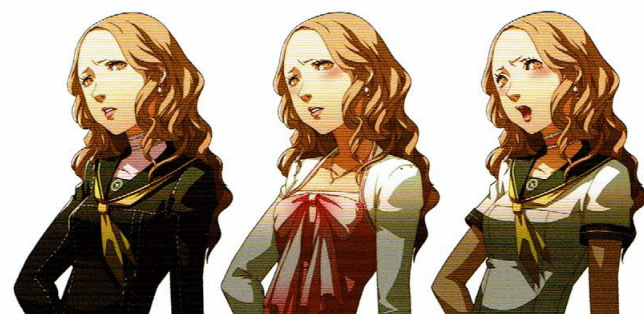
Winter uniform / Sorrowful　　Casual clothes / Bashful sorrow　　Summer uniform / Bashful anger

Early design idea

Final design draft

Ayane Matsunaga

✽Ayane is a first-year student at Yasogami High School, and is the most enthusiastic member of the school's band. Despite her zeal, however, Ayane is not very talented with her instrument, and this lack of ability has prevented her from participating in any recitals. Still, it seems nothing can dampen Ayane's spirit, and she continues to do her best. Interacting with Ayane will establish the Sun Arcana Social Link.

Costume & face
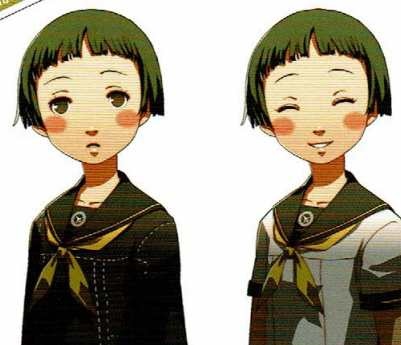
Main CG

Winter uniform / Normal　　Summer uniform / Smile

Casual clothes / Angry　　Casual clothes / Sorrowful

Final design draft

USE BRUSH.

Yumi Ozawa

✳Yumi is a second-year student at Yasogami High School, and is a member of the drama club. Yumi is intensely passionate about acting, but this enthusiasm has set her apart from her fellow drama club members in an undesirable way. Yumi appears to have some problems at home, as she often tries to put off going home after school. Interacting with Yumi will establish the Sun Arcana Social Link.

Main CG

Costume & face

Winter uniform / Normal   Casual clothes / Smile   Winter uniform / Angry

Summer uniform / Sorrowful   Winter uniform / Bashful sorrow

Early design idea

Final design draft

MEMBER OF DRAMA CLUB YUMI OZAWA

Saki Konishi

✳Saki is a third-year student at Yasogami High School, and is the target of Yosuke's infatuation. Though her family runs a small shop in the Central Shopping District, financial difficulties had forced Saki to work part-time at the very source of their store's monetary troubles: Junes. Saki was the first person to discover Mayumi Yamano's corpse, and tragically became the second victim of the serial murders.

Costume & face

Winter uniform / Normal   Winter uniform / Smile   Work uniform / Angry   Work uniform / Sorrowful

Final design

Tohru Adachi

*Detective Adachi works for the police department in Inaba. Tohru used to be a well-respected member of the force until one mistake destroyed his reputation, and he was transferred to the remote town of Inaba. Tohru is not the sharpest tool in the shed, and tends to speak before he thinks, which is what makes Ryotaro treat him like a rookie.
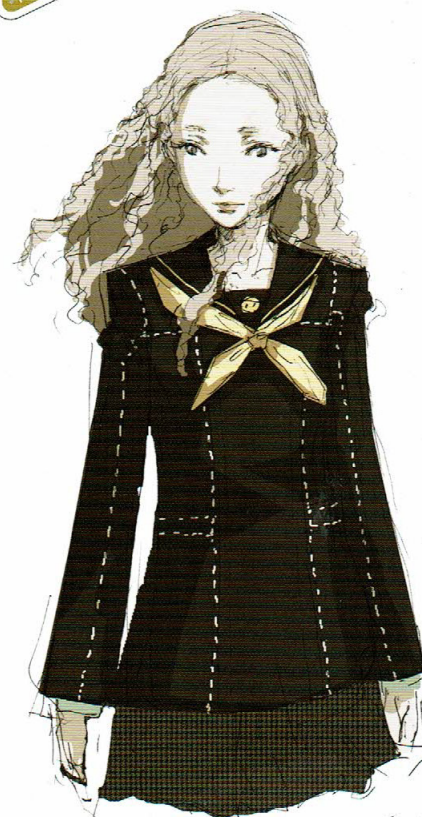
Costume & face

Suit / Normal

Suit / Smile

Suit / Angry

Suit / Sorrowful

Suit / Troubled

Suit / Hurt

Early design idea

BEDHEAD
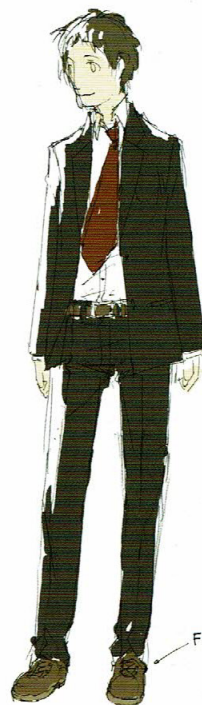
FIRST BUTTON IS UNDONE, AND NECKTIE IS CROOKED.

MOD COAT

SHORT TIE

FIELD BOOTS

Final design

BEDHEAD

SHORT TIE

FIRST BUTTON IS UNDONE, AND NECKTIE IS CROOKED.

FIELD BOOTS

from SOEJIMA

Tohru was initially going to be a red herring in the story, so I intentionally made him a rather suspicious character. When we decided to change his role, I tweaked his design to make him someone who looks like your average Joe and puts others at ease. He is often kind and usually awkward. Tohru used to be an elite detective, so he's actually quite good at his job, but I find that many people who are genuinely talented tend to have their quirks or are lacking in other areas, and that's something I tried to reflect in Tohru's design. Tohru almost always has bedhead and his tie is perpetually crooked. These details reveal that he's not very concerned with his fashion and appearance.

Taro Namatame

✳ Taro was once the city council secretary for Inaba. While married to Misuzu Hiiragi, Taro had an affair with Mayumi Yamano. Once the media learned of his transgression, Taro gave up his political position. With few options remaining, Taro started working for his family's delivery business.

Costume & face

Casual clothes / Normal

Work uniform / Deranged smile

Hospital gown / Fear

Smile

Angry

Deranged anger

The other "Taro" / Normal

Sorrowful

Hurt

The other "Taro" / Angry

The other "Taro" / Smile

Final design

from SOEJIMA

I had initially designed Taro with a deranged look, but once the story started solidifying, I decided to make him seem more like an unfortunate soul. In the final design, Taro's facial structure has his eyes and eyebrows moving in unison, the space under his nose is quite long, he seems to embody the very notion of misfortune, and his expression is always troubled. All of these traits were meant to make Taro a difficult character to grasp with few true talents, and I intended for them to portray him as the complete opposite of Adachi*, who is naturally skilled and talented. However, Taro is not an evil person, so I had to be careful not to make him look that way.

*T/N: in the official translation, the name 'Tahro' was used here. I assume this was a translation error, because the original Japanese text uses the character 足立, which means Adachi.

Final design

Early design ideas

Misuzu Hiiragi

＊An extremely popular enka singer who has been deemed "the princess of the enka world" and made numerous appearances in foreign countries. She was married to Taro, but found out about her husband's affair. She willingly spoke to the media about the affair, and eventually divorced Taro.

Main CG

Final design

Mayumi Yamano

＊A female announcer working at the local television station in Inaba. Once her affair with Taro was made public, she became the target of many distasteful comments. Mayumi attempted to hide herself from the world by staying at the Amagi Inn, but instead became the first victim in a string of murders.

Final design
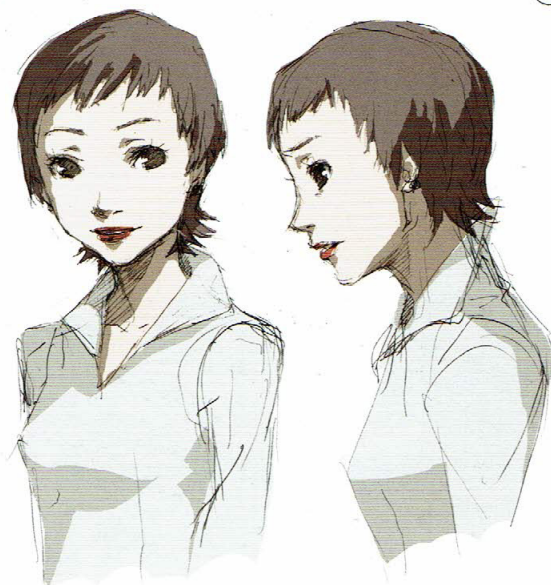
Main CG

Kinshiro Morooka

＊Kinshiro Morooka is the homeroom teacher of Class 2-2 at Yasogami High School, the class to which the Protagonist belongs. Due to his brazen abuse of his authority and oppressive attitude, Kinshiro has earned the nickname "King Moron" as well as the disdain of the general student populace.

Costume & face

Suit / Normal

Suit / Angry
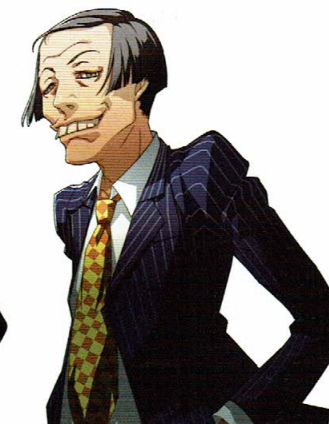
Suit / Smile

Concept art

Final design draft

SOCKS ARE WHITE
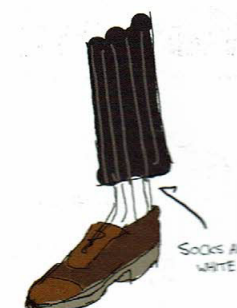
Noriko Kashiwagi

＊After Kinshiro's death, Noriko arrived to take his place as the homeroom teacher of Class 2-2. She is convinced that her beauty is undeniable, and eagerly fills the role of an archetypal seductress. No one can be completely certain of Noriko's age, but rumors suggest she is quite matured.

Costume & face

Shirt / Smile

Shirt / Angry

Final design draft

Yukata / Normal

Swimwear / Vexed

Concept art
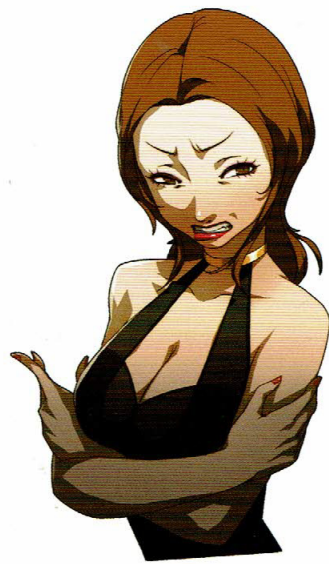
Hanako Ohtani

＊Hanako is a second-year student at Yasogami High School. She likes to eat a lot and is obese. Hanako has absolute confidence in herself, and was quite certain that she would win when she entered the school pageant. Despite her confidence, however, Hanako did not in fact win the pageant, and she does show hints of girlish uncertainty when her romantic crush is involved.

Costume & face

Winter uniform / Normal

Swimwear / Smile

Jersey / Normal

Yukata / Crying

Concept art

Mitsuo Kubo

✳ Mitsuo is a student who attends another school. He is socially awkward and tends to push his opinions on others. When his thoughts and opinions are rejected by those around him, Mitsuo can get very angry and will sometimes throw a tantrum. Kinshiro's harsh treatment of him drove Mitsuo to become a copycat killer during the serial murder case in order to kill Kinshiro and become famous.

Costume & face

Uniform / Normal

Casual clothes / Smile

Uniform / Angry

The other "Mitsuo" / Normal

The other "Mitsuo" / Smile

The other "Mitsuo" / Angry

Concept art

Old Lady Shiroku

✳ Old Lady Shiroku is the elderly proprietress of the Shiroku Store, located in the Central Shopping District. It is said that the store got its name from a fictional creature called a "Shiroku Toad", which is said to have four toes on its front legs and six toes on its back legs.

Bust-up CG

Concept art
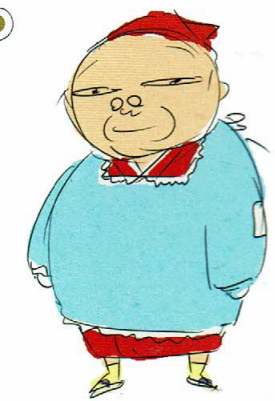
Master Daidara

✳ Master Daidara is the proprietor of Daidara Metalworks, named after the mythical giant known as the Daidarabocchi. Master Daidara considers himself an artist, and his works masterpieces. He is able to take resources gathered from Shadows and process them into various armaments.

Bust-up CG

Final design draft

Moel Gas Station Attendant

✳ Upon arriving in Inaba with Ryotaro and Nanako and entering the Central Shopping District for the first time, the Protagonist was greeted by this friendly attendant at the Moel Gas Station. When she found out that the Protagonist was new in town, she invited him to apply for a job at the gas station. Inexplicably, she is around a lot more during rainy days.

Bust-up CG

Final design draft

LOOSE

Recurring Characters

*These four characters also appeared in "P3" and have not undergone any visual design changes. As such, the illustrations displayed on this page are from "P3".

[Chihiro *Fushimi]

Chihiro is a student at Gekkoukan High School. In "P3", she was in her first year and acted as the student council treasurer. She was also the Justice Arcana Social Link. In "P4", Chihiro has become the student council president, and is the one who welcomes the students from Yasogami High School when they visit.

[*Igor]

Igor has appeared in every major "Persona" game, including the first game, both "Persona 2" games, "Persona 3", and "Persona 4". Igor is the mysterious proprietor of the Velvet Room, the space between the conscious and subconscious, and serves Philemon, the Velvet Room's highest-ranking being.

[Mr. *Edogawa]

Mr. Edogawa works at Gekkoukan High School as both the "Integrative Learning" teacher and the school nurse. He has a keen interest in subjects like magic, divinity, spirituality, and the occult. Mr. Edogawa's eccentric hobbies are usually the topic of his lessons. When he is not teaching, Mr. Edogawa can be found in the school infirmary, devoting himself to his strange experiments.

[President *Tanaka]

Tanaka is the president of his own company, and hosts a television show called "Tanaka's Amazing Commodities", where he uses his serious talent for public speaking to sell a variety of items. He has a liking for cute boys, and was the Devil Arcana Social Link in "P3".

Chapter 3
*Shadows

Shadow Yosuke

➡ Twisted Shopping District

✳ Shadow Yosuke was born from the darker aspects of Yosuke's soul, which include things like his feelings of boredom toward living a quiet life in a small town, his fascination with solving murder cases, and his tendancy to be annoyed by everyone around him. Yosuke's denial of these feelings gave them physical form. By acknowledging the Shadow as an honest reflection of his feelings, Yosuke gained Jiraiya as his Persona.

• Final design

from SOEJIMA

Since Shadow Yosuke is the first Shadow the player will encounter in the game, I wanted to use its design as a way to convey the fact that a Persona is, in fact, a Shadow. For this purpose, I designed Shadow Yosuke to have more design elements in common with Yosuke's Persona than any other characters' Shadow forms have with their Personae.

• Model CG
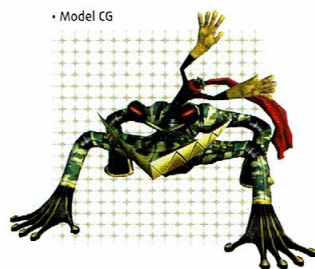
• Rough draft

dark GALPA

HUMAN SIZE

Shadow Chie

➡ Yukiko's Castle

✳ Chie had always been envious of her best friend Yukiko's beauty and grace, and often took pleasure in Yukiko's harsh treatment of herself. These dark feelings gave birth to Shadow Chie, and Chie's initial denial of these feelings gave them physical form. Once Chie acknowledged the Shadow as an honest reflection of her feelings, she gained Tomoe as her Persona.

from SOEJIMA

The people underneath Shadow Chie represent the people in Chie's life, but mostly Yukiko. Chie's dark side is her need to belittle and feel superior to others in order to maintain her sense of personal identity. I kept this fact at the front of my mind while I was designing this Shadow.

• Model CG
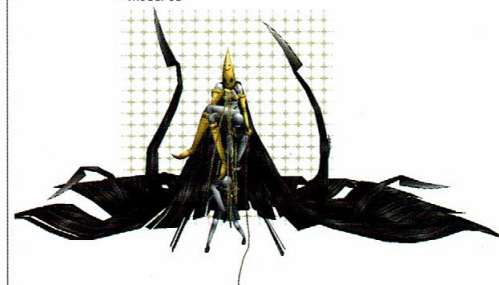
• Rough draft

• Final design

SHADOW CHIE

THIS FACE IS JUST DRAWN ON.

THE PEOPLE UNDERNEATH ARE WEARING YASOGAMI UNIFORMS.
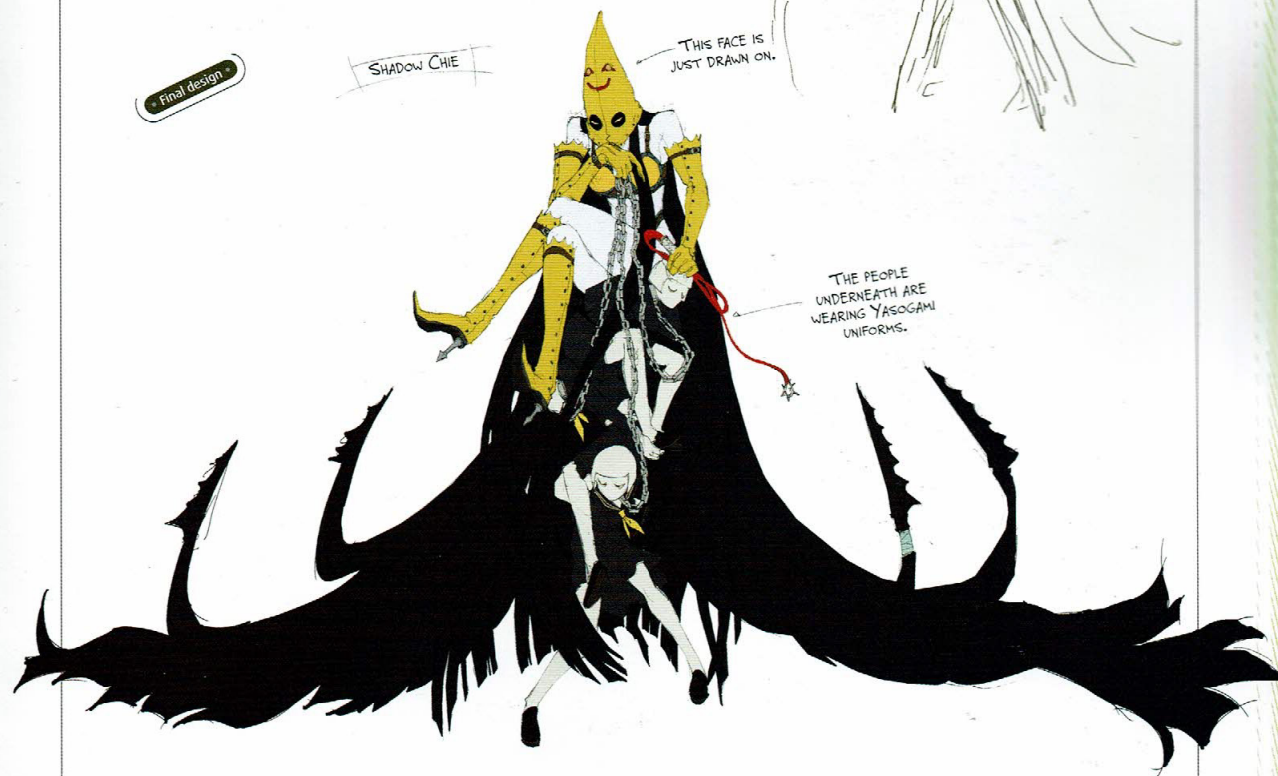
03 ..... Shadow

Shadow Yukiko

→ Yukiko's Castle

✳ Shadow Yukiko is the manifestation of Yukiko's secret desire to be swept away from her restricting life as the heiress to her family's inn, given physical form by Yukiko's denial of her true desires. Yukiko's eventual acknowledgment of Shadow Yukiko as a reflection of her true feelings results in Konohana Sakuya becoming Yukiko's Persona.

• Rough draft

• Rough draft

• Model CG

HUMAN SIZE

DARK YUKIKO

• Final design

• Model CG
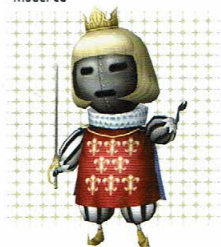
from SOEJIMA

Yukiko believes her future has been set in stone for her, and she wants nothing more than to escape from that life. I used a bird cage and the bird confined within to express Yukiko's opinion of her life and her desire for freedom. I shaped the bird cage like a chandelier to represent "Princess" Yukiko's interest in fancy Western fashions and anything else that she feels is the polar opposite of everything her life represents.
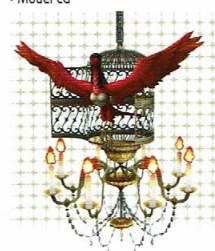
04 ..... Shadow

Shadow Kanji

→ Steamy Bathhouse

✳ Born of Kanji's inner fear and weakness -- chiefly, his desire to be understood and accepted for who he really is -- Shadow Kanji gained physical form through Kanji's denial of his feelings. Kanji gained the Persona Take-Mikazuchi by acknowledging Shadow Kanji as a representation of these feelings.

• Model CG

• Model CG

• Rough draft

GRUNT

DARK KANJI BOSS

• Final design

DARK KANJI REAR

from SOEJIMA

This design reflects Kanji's own confusion and uncertainty regarding his feelings for Naoto, and the concern over his possible homosexuality. The massive body is holding two symbols of the male gender, and Kanji is shown surrounded by roses. His macho buddies have been named "Tough Guy" and "Nice Guy", but not by me, I promise. (laughs) I actually think they're great names, as I remember laughing the first time I saw them.

Shadow Rise

➡ Marukyu Striptease

✳ Rise's desire to be seen as Rise Kujikawa instead of "the idol Rise" was strong enough to create this Shadow, and her denial gave it physical form. Rise gained Himiko as a Persona by acknowledging this Shadow as a true reflection of herself.

• Final design

BODY PATTERN
IS PSYCHEDELIC.

DARK RISE

from SOEJIMA

It was decided early on that Rise's dungeon would be a strip club. Since Rise's desire is to be seen, I felt I had no choice but to design her Shadow self as a pole dancer! I have little interest in drawing anything of a sexual nature, so this design wasn't about giving myself an excuse to draw something indecent. An interesting bit of trivia is that the first animation assigned to this model by the motion team was rejected outright for being far too suggestive. (laughs)

• Model CG
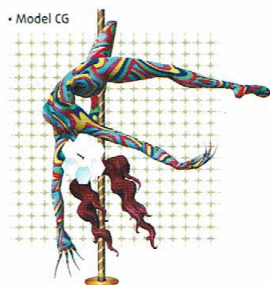
Shadow Teddie

➡ Marukyu Striptease

✳ Shadow Teddie is the manifestation of Teddie's anxiety over his uncertainty about his identity and the purpose of his existence. These stressful thoughts were given physical form, with Rise's comments about her own identity crisis acting as the catalyst. Once Teddie realized that there was no need for him to suffer through his uncertainties alone, he gained the Persona Kintoki-Douji.

• Model CG

• Rough design

INSIDE IS A BLACK VOID.

SMOKE IS GETTING
SUCKED IN.

from SOEJIMA

Teddie's concern is that he might be empty on the inside, which results in his hearing a voice at the back of his mind suggesting that he is nobody and may not even exist. Shadow Teddie is a literal representation of these dark thoughts. Shadow Teddie's face is not falling off outwardly, but rather is getting sucked inside piece by piece, into the vast, empty void within. The idea behind the design is that Teddie will continue to be sucked into nothingness until he just ceases to exist.

07 Shadow
Shadow Mitsuo
➔ Void Quest

＊This is the Shadow of Mitsuo Kubo, who murdered Kinshiro before ending up in the Midnight Channel. The Shadow was born of Mitsuo's disinterest in social interactions and his disgust of others, and was given physical form by Mitsuo's intense dissatisfaction at the way everyone seemed to dismiss him. The Shadow exists within "Mitsuo the Hero", and protects itself by using this manifestation of Mitsuo as a shield.

• Model CG

➔ Shadow Mitsuo

from SOEJIMA

I am personally quite pleased with this Shadow design, as I feel it strikes a great balance between design and gimmicks. This Shadow is a representation of the identity Mitsuo is able to take on when he enters the world of his video games in order to escape the ugly world outside.

RING OF UNUSUAL TEXT.
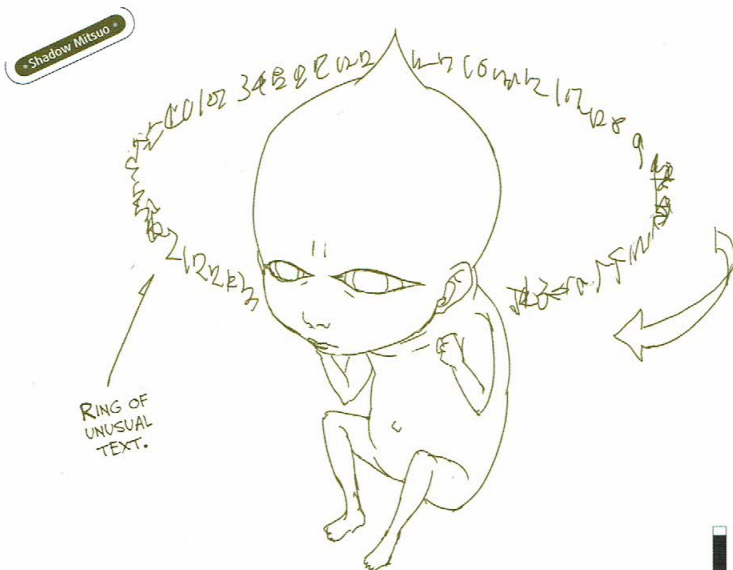
• Model CG
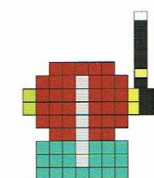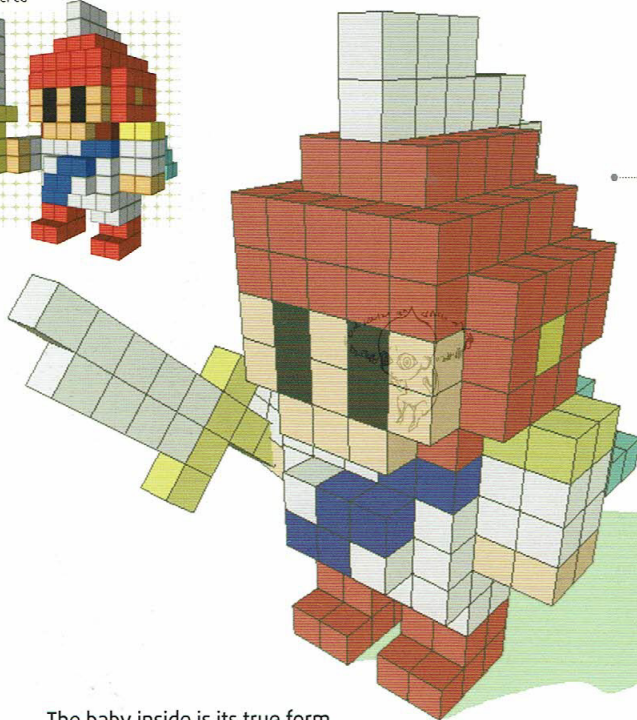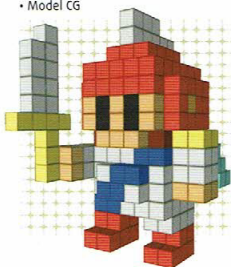
Rear
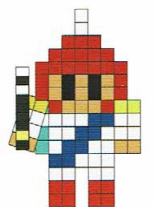
Front
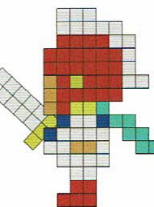
Side

MITSUO BOSS

The baby inside is its true form.
While the baby is surrounded by this pixel block hero, it will be invulnerable.

08 Shadow
Shadow Naoto
➔ Secret Laboratory

＊Naoto suffers from a strong frustration over the fact that everyone treats her like a child, never taking her seriously. On top of that, she faces the impossible obstacle of gender, which prevents her from truly becoming the strong male role models she admires so much. Denying this inner turmoil gave it physical form as Shadow Naoto. Only by acknowledging this Shadow as a part of herself did Naoto gain the Persona Sukuna-Hikona.

Rough draft

GLASS

LIGHTS FLASH.

BODY AND WEAPON ARE SHINY SILVER.

from SOEJIMA

Since Shadow Naoto shows up in the Secret Laboratory, I used phrases like "hidden base" and "surgical modification" to design this Shadow based on Naoto's pre-combat quotes. The visual elements like the complete physical overhaul, electronic brain, laser gun, and flashing parts were inspired by classic sentai hero shows, and help to give the design an old-school touch.

• Model CG

Kunino-sagiri

➡ Heaven

* This is the form that results from the combination of Taro Namatame's pure and strong desire to save the targeted people from becoming victims of the serial murderer with his self-absorbed belief that he is the only one capable of saving them. The Shadow took on this twisted physical form when it merged with Namatame.

from SOEJIMA

This design is the visual representation of Taro's blind faith that all of his choices are morally correct and in the service of justice. I imagine that this is sort of how Taro might picture an angel. The fact that the eyes are looking in different directions expresses Taro's tendency to ignore the truth of people or circumstances that are right in front of him. I was hoping to convey that Taro is the kind of person who does not think too deeply about things and is unable to see the truth of them, and is therefore impossible to talk to. The perpetual motion of the gear around its head represents something absolute, such as god or Taro's desired sense of safety... or possibly doubt. The antenna on top of the Shadow's head is assumed to be receiving a signal from somewhere, and the "old" quality of the design was meant to make this Shadow look even less reliable than it already does. (laughs)

NAMATAME BOSS

LIKE AN ANTENNA ANGEL FLOATING IN A SEA OF CLOUDS.

• Model CG

Rough draft

• HERO - MOONLIGHT MASK, SENTAI
• GODDESS SCALES - AND A GUN, NOT A SWORD
• KNIGHT
• MIXED JUNK
• PRIEST

Magatsu Izanagi → Heaven

✷ Magatsu Izanagi is the Persona used by the person at the core of the serial murders. Born of the swirling void within this person's soul, Magatsu Izanagi has a dark and ominous appearance. This Persona is used to fulfill evil desires, such as the pursuit of gratuitous pleasures or the elimination of individuals who offend the person controlling Magatsu Izanagi.

• Final design

IZANAGI

• Model CG

from SOEJIMA

I came up with this design because the Protagonist has many opportunities to fight a Persona (in Shadow form) belonging to someone else, but never the chance to fight his own. With regard to roles, the person behind this Persona represents the polar opposite of the Protagonist, so I thought it would be appropriate to design a "dark" version of the Protagonist's Persona. The addition of the word "Magatsu" to the name and the creepy pattern running all over the surface of the body make it obvious that this Persona is a being of darkness.

Ameno-sagiri → Magatsu Inaba

✷ Concealed within the Midnight Channel, this Shadow is the culprit producing the fog that engulfs Inaba. Fueled by Izanami's life energy, Ameno-sagiri intends to enshroud the entire world in its fog, starting with Inaba. Its one large eye allows it to see through to the outside world, and that is how it monitors humans.

from SOEJIMA

This Shadow acts as both a fog generator and an observer. I went with the eyeball design because Ameno-sagiri's whole purpose is to watch humans from within the fog it creates. The design contains many mechanical elements, including a camera lens for the eye. When fighting Ameno-sagiri, you can see Inaba below because the Midnight Channel has a physical link to the human world through the sky above Inaba.

• Rough draft

Boss* Battle
(FOG GENERATOR)

BACKGROUND IS THE WHOLE CITY.

SHOULD LOOK LIKE A GIANT EGG (SUNNY SIDE UP) FELL ON THE CITY.

• Model CG
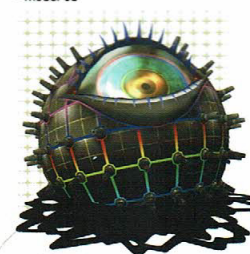
EYE IS A CAMERA LENS.

*T/N: This text originally described the battle using the killer's name. The rest of the book goes out of its way to conceal the identity of the killer, so I'm not sure why they left it in here. I've changed it to "Boss" battle to keep the ambiguity.

Izanami First and Second Forms

→ Yomotsu Hirasaka

from SOEJIMA

Depending on how the player goes through the game, this is a boss they might face after they've technically finished the story. As such, I felt comfortable designing this character without any elements that tie it to the game's main story. This Shadow's true identity is hidden by design because it is based on the myth of Izanagi and Izanami. It's all about not having to see the harsh truth unless you really look for it, or the regret felt after seeing such truth.
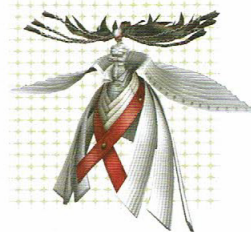
*Izanami is the entity that caused the chain of events that led to the serial murders that swept across Inaba. By feeding on the desires hidden within the souls of humans, Izanami intended to cover the entire world in a thick fog that would transform people into Shadows, resulting in a world without awareness or thought.

from SOEJIMA

Izanami's Second Form is not so much a transformation from the First Form, but rather the figure contained in the First Form revealed. Whenever I design a final boss, I tend to refrain from putting too many tricks or gimmicks into the design. This is because I feel a boss with too much "fun" inserted in it will lose something in the process. I prefer straight and simple designs for final boss characters. Because of this, I think Izanami ended up with a solid design that easily identifies her as the final boss.

Rough draft

Rough draft
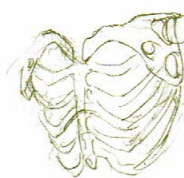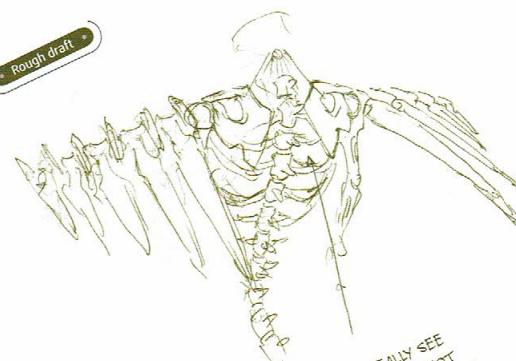
YOU DON'T REALLY SEE THIS PART, SO IT'S NOT TOO IMPORTANT, BUT THIS IS THE GENERAL IDEA.

• Model CG

• Model CG

Floor Shadows

➡ Various Dungeons

※ This section contains the designs for a handful of the new Shadows introduced in "Persona 4". These Shadows appear randomly during dungeon exploration, and the larger ones sometimes serve as mid-bosses.
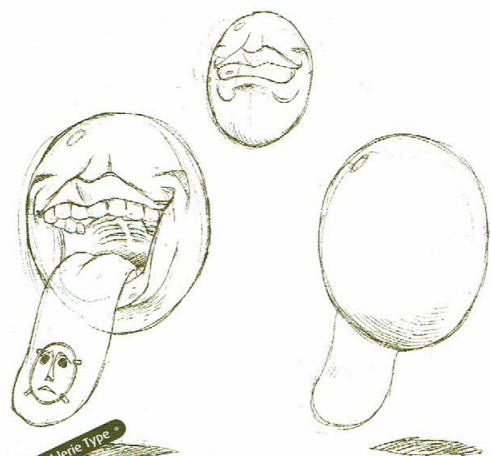
● Magician: Hablerie Type ●
Lying Hablerie - Forgotten Hablerie - Flattering Hablerie - Agitating Hablerie

MASK
EMPTY

● Emperor: King Type ●
Positive King - Egotistical King - Great King - Brilliant King

UNDERWEAR (BOXERS)

● Justice: Machine Type ●
Steel Machine - Dominating Machine - Solemn Machine - Heartless Machine

● Strength: Nyogo Type ●
Inviting Nyogo - Blossom Nyogo - Valuing Nyogo - Silent Nyogo

SUKE-SAN

KAKU-SAN

STAFF
KOMON-SAMA

STONE FIGURES
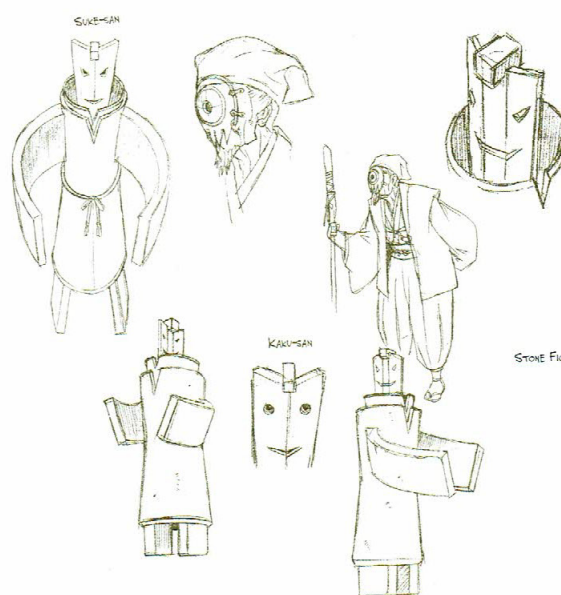
● Fool: Okina Type ●
Shallow Okina - Reckless Okina - Reformed Okina - Moon Okina

FLOPPY

WHOLE BODY IS GLASS.

REJECTED
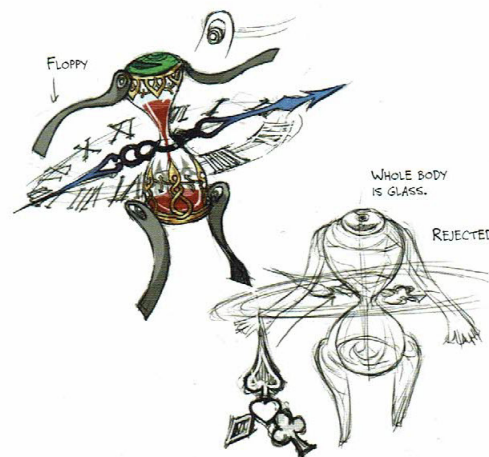
● Fortune: Sand Type ●
Flowing Sand - Perpetual Sand - Infinite Sand - Eternal Sand

● Love: Cupid Type ●
Monopolizing Cupid - Blind Cupid - Devoted Cupid - Gracious Cupid

STAINED GLASS

MASK

STAINED GLASS

MASK

STAINED GLASS

MASK

● High Priestess: Pesce Type ●
Calm Pesce - Pursuing Pesce - Truth Pesce - Revelation Pesce

KEY IS FLOATING IN MID-AIR.

BATON

THIS IS A HOLE.
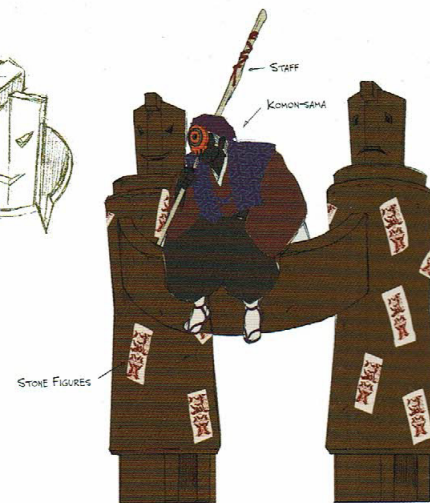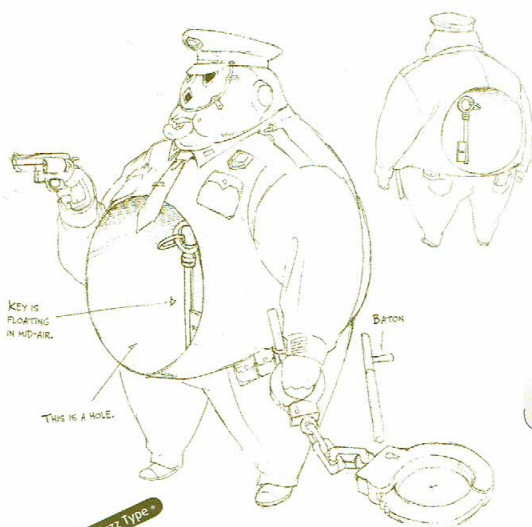
• Hierophant: Fuzz Type •

Bribed Fuzz - Persistent Fuzz - Monomaniac Fuzz - Chaos Fuzz

• High Priestess: Idol Type •

Tranquil Idol - Liberating Idol - Leading Idol - Vehement Idol - Primitive Idol
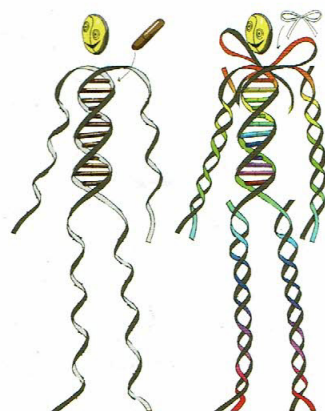
• Fortune: Gene Type •

Miss Gene - Fail Gene - Happy Gene - Next Gene

MASK

BLUE ROSE

TUMMY IS SLIGHTLY BULGING.

• Empress: Bambino Type •

Secret Bambino - Blooming Bambino - Avarice Bambino - Free Bambino

MASSIVE CANNONS

CANNONS
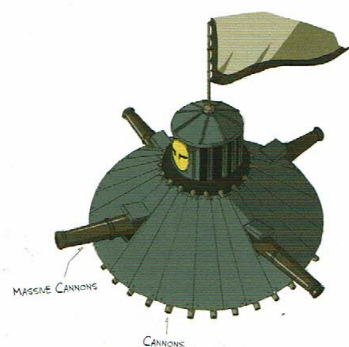
• Chariot: Panzer Type •

Dismayed Panzer - Rash Panzer - Conceited Panzer - Ptarmigan Panzer
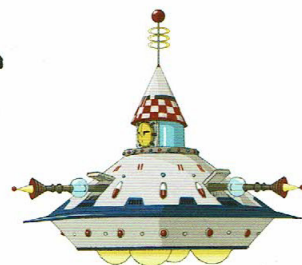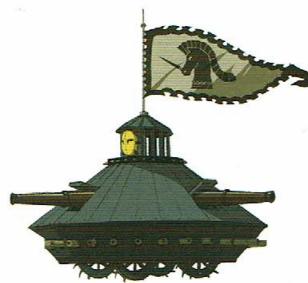
Chapter 4
*
Extra

···· Uniform Designs

Uniform Design Ideas

✳ The uniforms are an important part of this game, which focuses a great deal on the characters' school lives. Due to the vital role the Yasogami High School uniforms play, their design went through a rather long journey of trial and error. Since Soejima produced countless design drafts, we had to choose just a select few to include in this section. If you would like to learn more about the process by which the uniforms reached their final design and the meanings hidden therein, please refer to the interview that starts on page 186. Also, do take note of the collection of design drafts for the school emblem, as they are quite rare.

• Full body uniform chart •

P4 Character Comparison Chart, Including Shoes and Hats

Kanji Yosuke

Naoto Rise Chie Protagonist Yukiko Teddie

Protagonist Yukiko Chie Yosuke Naoto Kanji Rise
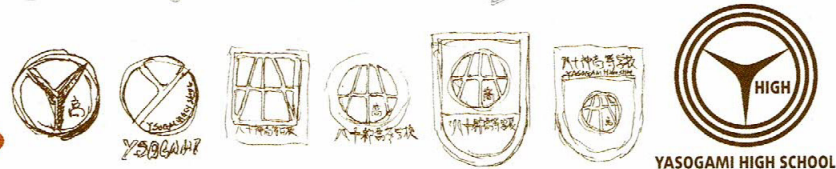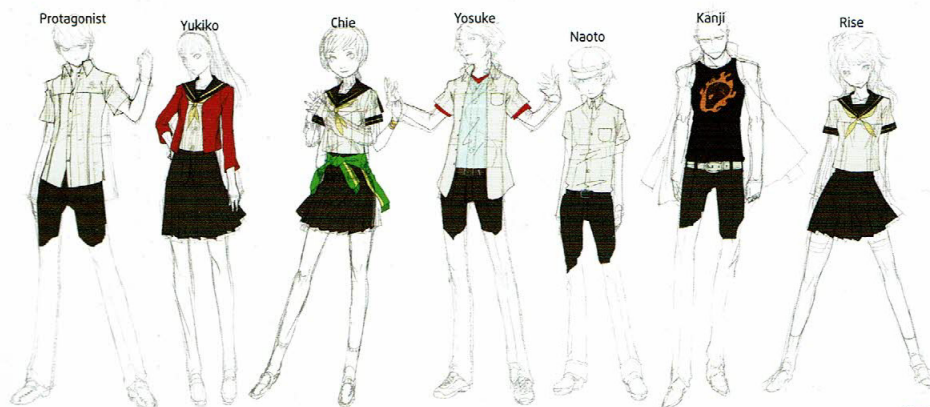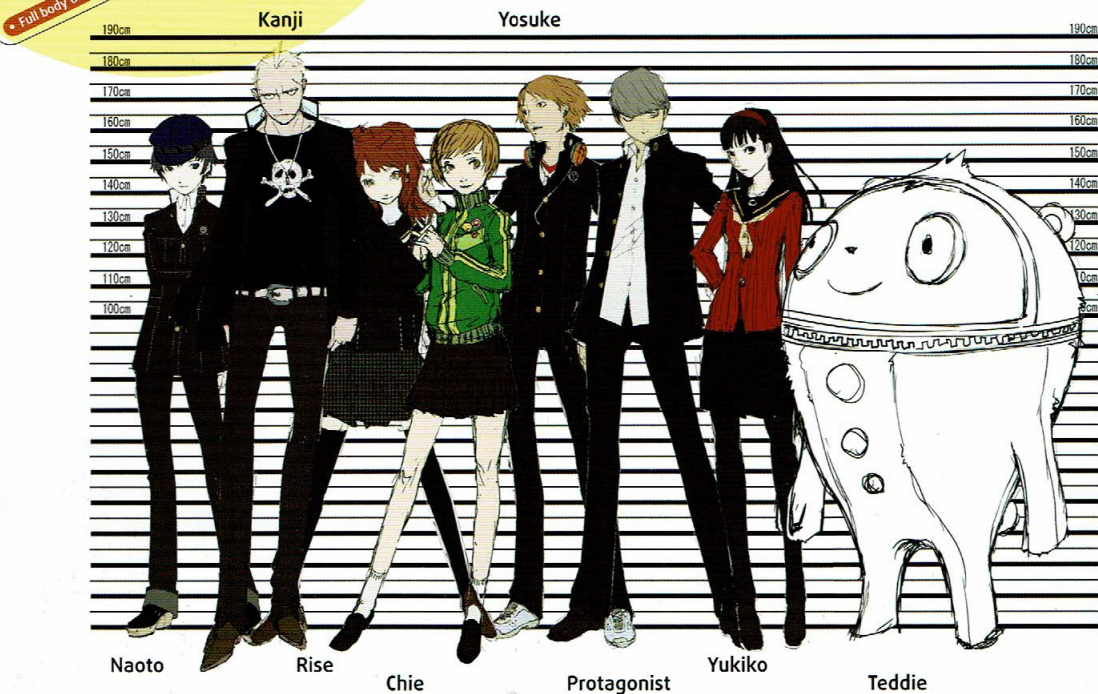
• School emblem design ideas •

HIGH

YASOGAMI HIGH SCHOOL

• Uniform early design idea •

THREE LINES ON SIDES.

Y.H.

YASOGAMI HIGH SCHOOL LOGO

PERSONA 4
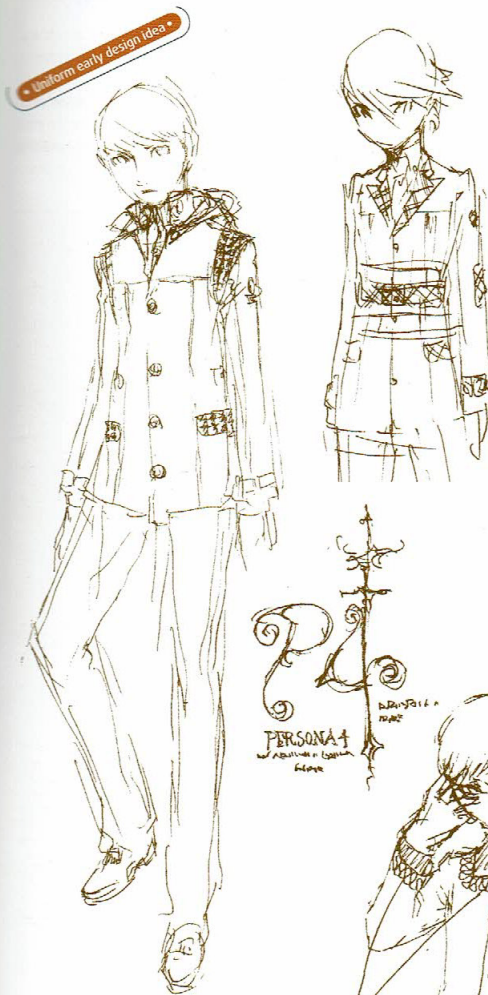
• Jersey design idea •
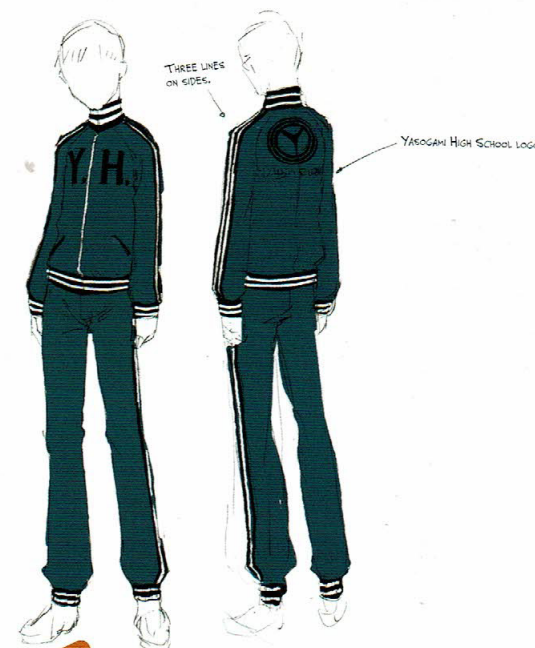
TURTLENECK OR A SHIRT?

TURTLENECK WILL BE A PALE COLOR, WHILE THE UNIFORM WILL BE A DARKER COLOR.

LACE? SOME KIND OF DIFFERENT MATERIAL. SUMMER UNIFORM HAS THIS MATERIAL AROUND THE COLLAR.
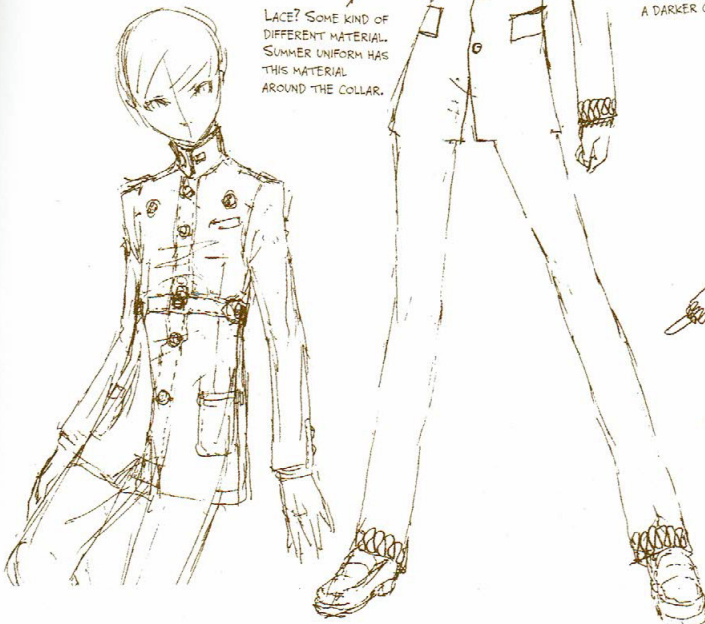
FEMALES WILL WEAR A ONE-PIECE DRESS WITH A ZIPPER ON THE BACK.
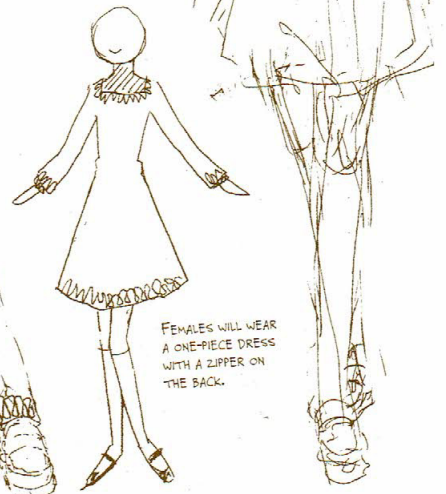
Marketing Illustration Design Ideas

✳ The sketches in this section were design drafts created for things like the game's package art, magazine advertisements, storefront displays, and retailer-specific pre-order bonus items. These illustrations are therefore considered to be pieces done for marketing purposes, and the retailer-specific designs are particularly interesting to see, as Soejima personally discussed each design with the retailer in question. The results were illustrations that are heavily influenced by each retailer's corporate image and colors. They can also be taken as a reflection of the characters each retailer expected to be the most popular among players, which led to some interesting and diverse design and character choices.
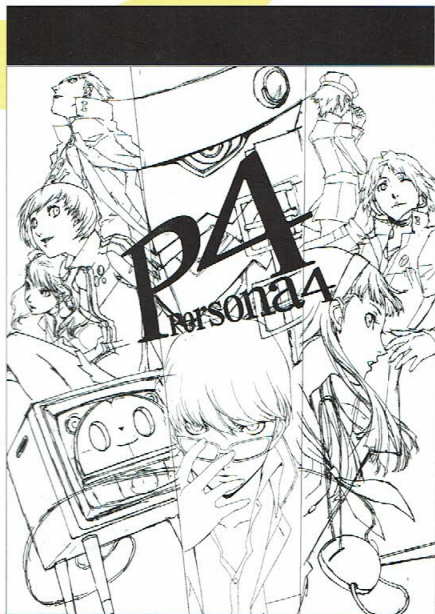
• Package art ideas •
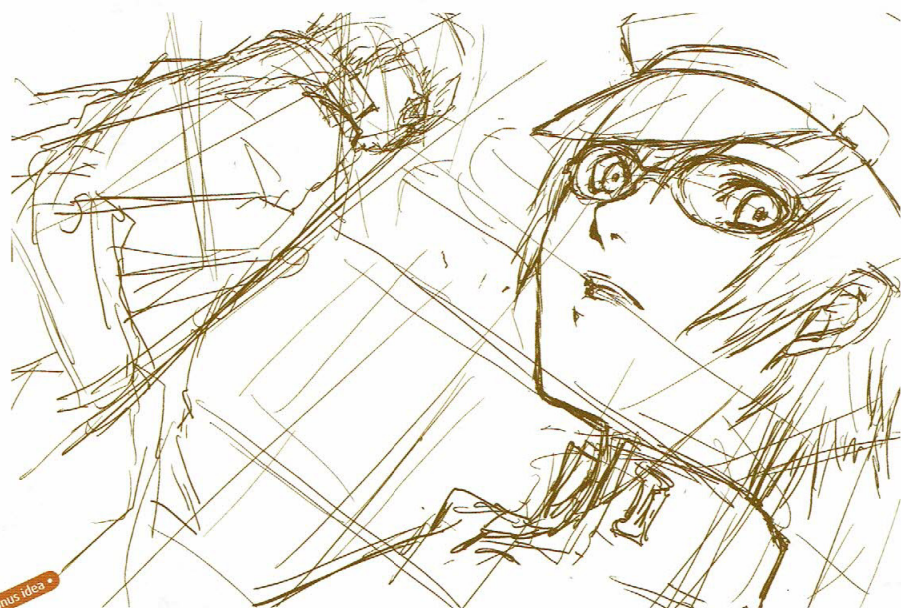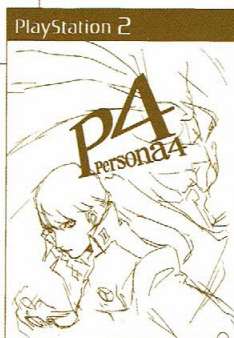
• Sofmap pre-order bonus idea •

• GEO pre-order bonus idea •

• Messe Sanoh pre-order bonus idea •

• Wonder Goo pre-order bonus idea •

• Media Land pre-order bonus idea •

Opening Storyboards

Opening Sequence

✻ The sketches on this page are the instructional notes used as reference during the animation process. The detailed notes regarding each character's defining visual structure were provided by Design Section Manager Wada. These pieces are particularly invaluable for fans who are interested in the characters' design details, or artists who would like to learn from Soejima's style. The page to the right contains a portion of the storyboard for the game's opening sequence. This storyboard can be considered a roadmap for the creation of the opening sequence, and Studio Hibari has included some of the detailed instructions they used during the creation process.

Teddie
- His angry face looks like this.
- Ears should be half-circles.
- Eyes should match the slope of his face.
- When his eyes are looking to the side...
  [eye] not like this [eye] more like this
- Buttons should be pretty large.
- Nose position is quite high.

Protagonist
- This is the correct balance.
- Has sideburns. Facial expression should be like this.
- The direction of his face changed slightly while I was drawing him... I apologize. Please go with the original sketch I submitted.

Chie
- Chie's eyelids should be clearly separated.
- Emphasize this red line to make her hair like a puffy mushroom.

Protagonist & Yukiko
- Keep facial balance like this.
- When the space under the nose is too long, it's noticeable.
- Height difference should be like this. Lines should be sharp.

Rise
- Rise. Hair reference.
- Bangs are not centrally parted.

Izanagi
- Refer to this image for proportional balance.
- Face should not be too thin.

Interlude: 16 seconds

5:00 - Interlude

PICTURE | **ACTION**
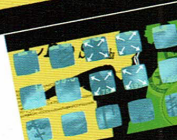
During the interlude, move the characters in lively ways.

Notes:
- Background is composed of flat colors, with the left side always displaying yellow (the theme color), and the right side displaying the character's color.
- Show animated typography on the right side. (With variations like the text floating by in different directions, etc.)
- Place an image of an item associated with the character on the left side of the background.
- Each character should execute an action that is associated with them. (Perhaps taken from combat.) They should all be dressed in their winter uniform.
- Use various wipes when transitioning between characters. (Described in more detail later)

Yosuke:
Action - Standby stance from combat. Does something cool like flip his kunai, but will sometimes mess up.
Item on the right side will be headphones.

Chie:
Action - As the silhouette moves, it goes from an extreme close-up to a distant image for the wipe (character transition). Kung fu actions (like in combat).
The vector of the typography should change for each character.
Item on the right side will be badges.

The wipe patterns should all be lively, such as the above examples with expanding images, horizontal slides, and silhouette wipes. Please incorporate some of the in-game wipe images included in the videos we sent you.

Yukiko:
Action - Dancing in her uniform (see combat references).
Item on the right side will be a fan or traditional Japanese pattern.

Chorus: 16 seconds

57:00 ~ Chorus

CUT | **PICTURE** | **ACTION** | **DIALOGUE** | **Studio HIBARI** | **TIME**

Make good use of the music's tempo during the chorus to show the different characters.

<Requested Screens (chronological order unimportant)>
- Yosuke: Speeding along on his bicycle (mountain bike) in his winter uniform.
- Chie: Running, full of energy. Winter uniform.
- Yukiko: Dancing. Winter uniform, wearing a kimono. (Will provide reference for the kimono)
- Kanji: From the cameraman's perspective, we see Kanji being rude to the TV network staff. End scene with him covering the camera with his hand. Wearing his winter casual clothes or uniform.
- Rise: Waving her hand at the audience during a concert, wearing her concert costume.
- Naoto: TV appearance, winter uniform. (View her speaking passionately from an angle, then show her from the front through a camera)
- Teddie: Comes running in from the left, then trips.

Random accent inserts...
- Noise
- Nanako
- Car chase scene, etc.

The hand poses here are just a general reference. Please fix them.

In and around the final vocals of the song...
Protagonist: Clenches a burnt card in his fist and is enveloped in a blue flame. (Winter uniform. Shown from the front in a cool way.)

Use cut 4B (Izanagi swinging his blade)
> Starts engulfed in blue flame, which recedes
> Background should probably be yellow, but that may change.

Inside the TV

✳ Along with the town of Inaba, the TV world is the other primary setting of "P4" and serves as a home for Teddie, nest for Shadows, and repository for the targets of the serial murders. Humans and Shadows usually have no opportunity to interact, but the TV world is an exception. As such, it is easy to imagine this mysterious place as a dark and foreboding realm, but these design drafts show that the development team intentionally designed this space to have an upbeat feel to it. The reason for this is because the TV world reflects all of the things people look for in a television program, including the things they want to see, learn, and enjoy.

‣ TV world concept art ‣

MURDERER?

P4
PERSONA4
‣ TV concept art ‣
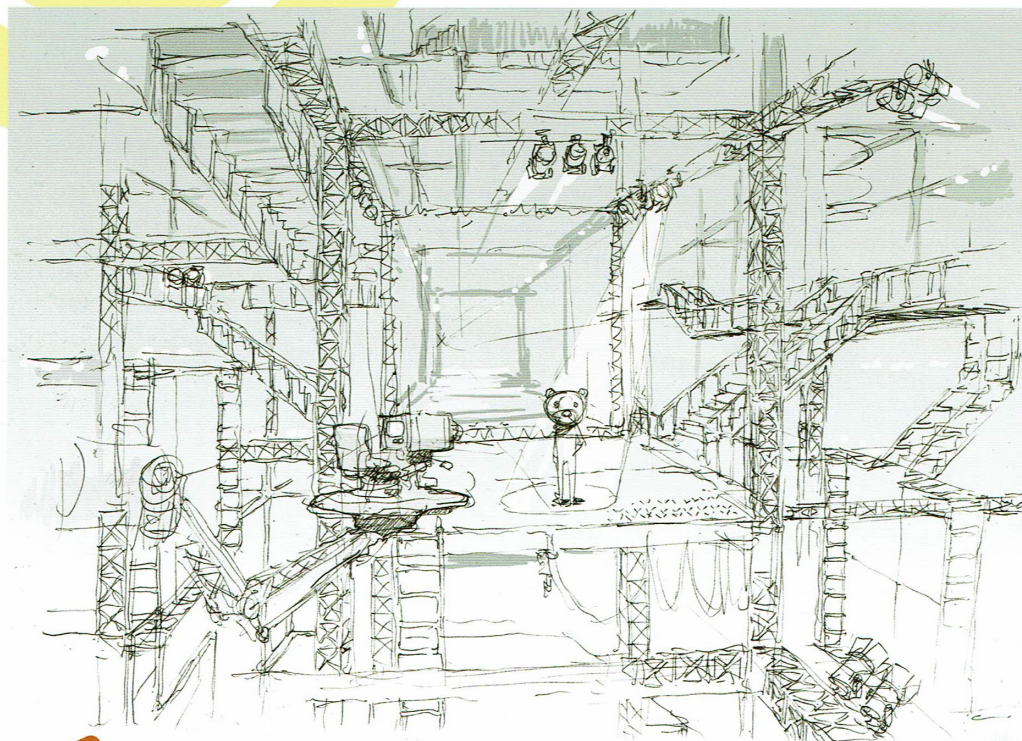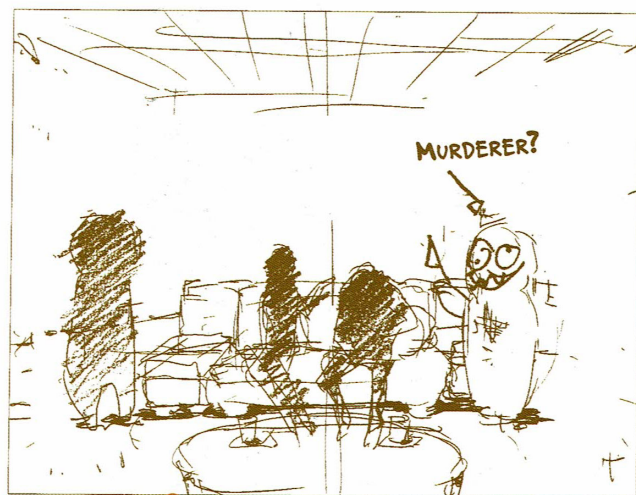
‣ Midnight Channel concept art 1 ‣
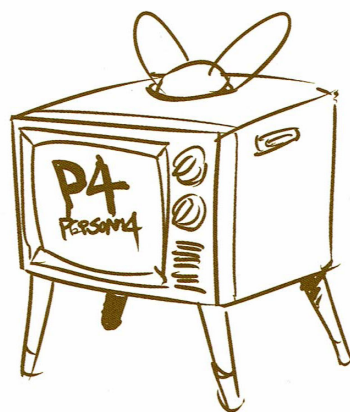
XYZ TV
‣ 真夜中テレビイメージ2 ‣

‣ エントランス床デザイン ‣

Background Art CG

＊In contrast to the fantastical and often rowdy TV world, the town of Inaba was designed to be overflowing with realism. Since the Midnight Channel and Inaba are meant to act as visual polar opposites, it was that much more important for the design team to get the details of Inaba just right. Through careful information-gathering trips to actual small towns and painstaking analysis of the pre-conceived notions people tend to have about rural towns, the team was able to create the astonishingly realistic town of Inaba. By reviewing this CG gallery and taking note of the meticulous details and calculated design elements, you will come to realize how intricate this unassuming little town really is.

Full map

Yasogami High School

Ryotaro's home

Central Shopping District

Samegawa Flood Plain

Junes

Ryotaro's home (Exterior)
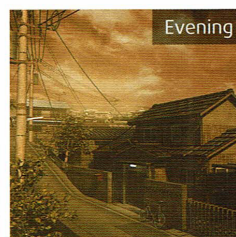
Evening

This is the house where Ryotaro, Nanako, and the Protagonist live. The classic stone fence, its pattern, the little red mailbox sticking out of it, the large sliding door at the front, and the gas meter all make this in-game representation look like a real home that can often be seen not only in rural towns, but also some suburban areas as well.
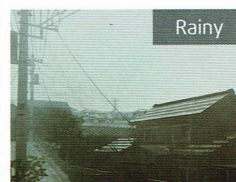
Rainy

Foggy

Junes

This is the dining and amusement space located on the roof of Junes. The main characters use this space for hanging out or discussing their plans. The intricate details in the background, including the illustrations that seem to have been drawn by children and the positioning of the furniture, all contribute to the creation of a true replica of the department stores we see in real life.
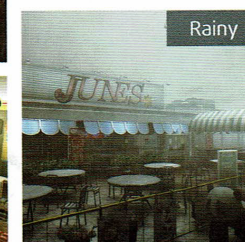
Evening

Rainy
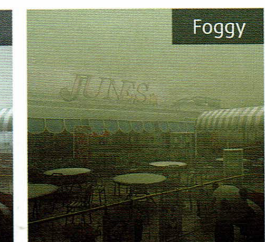
Foggy

Building interior

West entrance

Grocery department

Samegawa Flood Plain
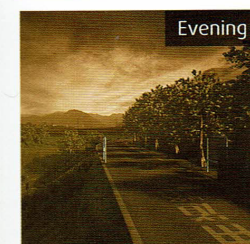
Evening

The Samegawa Flood Plain and its riverbed may not be easy for most people to relate to, as a flood plain is not something you will see every day unless you live close to a river. Still, the designers were meticulous in adding specific details like the way the trees line the street, the traffic markings on the road, and the shape and color of the fence in order to make this space feel more familiar to the player.

Rainy
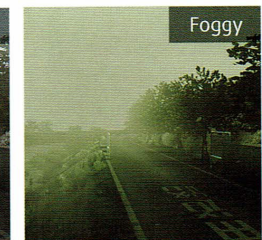
Foggy

Surrounding area

Riverbank

Riverbed

Yasogami High School
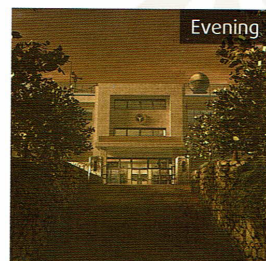
Evening

Rainy
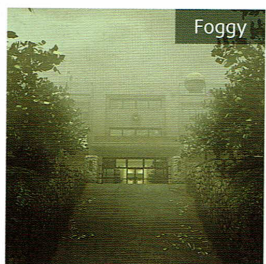
Foggy
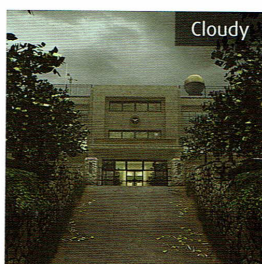
Cloudy

This is the high school that the Protagonist and his friends attend. This angle shows the front of the school at the top of the hill that leads down to the Samegawa Flood Plain. Yasogami doesn't have any of the defining uniqueness of Gekkoukan from "Persona 3", but it is instead this notable blandness that makes Yasogami so similar to public schools in real life, and thus more realistic and relatable.

Building interior

Roof

Classroom

Field

Gymnasium

Classroom

Evening

Rainy

Foggy

Cloudy

Central Shopping District

This is the south side of the Central Shopping District. The opening of a Junes branch in this small town ran many of the privately-owned local shops out of business. This area also features a gas station, the symbol of the modern "car era", which also contributed to dwindling customer numbers for the local shops. These little details add a touch of reality to the Central Shopping District, and shed some light on the issues faced by small towns in the real world.

Shopping District

Velvet Room portal
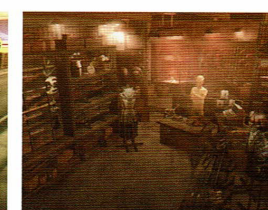
Daidara Metalworks

Yomenaido Bookstore
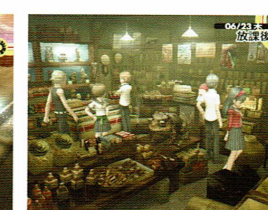
Shiroku Store

Marukyu Tofu shop

Aiya

Tatsuhime Shrine

Tatsumiya
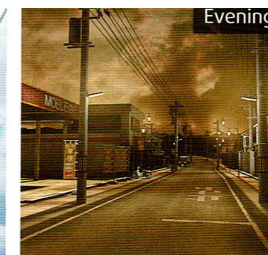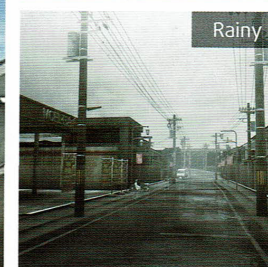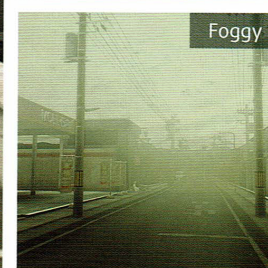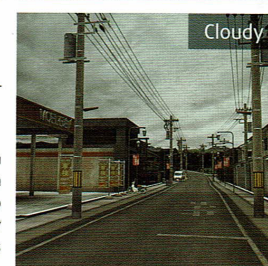
"Persona 4" Art Director, Character Designer
Interview with Shigenori Soejima
What is "Coolness"?

✳ SOEJIMA'S JOB AND THE ATMOSPHERE AT ATLUS

To be honest, the main purpose of this book was to offer a kind of "Soejima Collection" to the fans. We wanted the players to get the full Soejima experience with regard to "Persona 4" (P4).

Soejima: "Soejima Collection"? No one told me that... (laughs)

Well, allow us to tell you now. (laughs) Keeping in line with this theme, we've thus far had you provide comments for each character. Now, to round out the book, we'd like to discuss "P4" as a whole with you. Please start us off by telling us about your role in the project.

Soejima: I was the art director and character designer.

Art director and character designer are both roles you have previously taken on for other projects. Would you please describe for us the specific duties that are associated with these titles?

Soejima: When the decision is made to start a big project -- say, for instance, when "P4" was first brought forth as a project -- it's the art director's job to figure out what direction to go in as far as the visual aspect of the project is concerned. It is also the art director's job to maintain this direction during the course of production, to ensure that the team doesn't stray off course.

Does that mean that all of the work done by the other designers eventually makes its way to you for approvals?

Soejima: I suppose that's true... but the work environment at Atlus is not particularly stiff or formal, so it's not like I meticulously examine each piece. I can generally trust the artists to figure things out on their own.

So instead of a process full of harsh scrutiny, everyone works in a more casual and relaxed atmosphere?

Soejima: Mostly, yes. There are times when we have to crack down on things and make hard calls, but it's usually a pretty happy workplace. We prefer to discuss things and get everyone's input on decisions.

How does one go about deciding on a visual direction for any given project?

Soejima: Personally, I start sketching images that I think suit the feel of the game we are trying to produce. In the case of "P4", Director Hashino (Katsura Hashino, the director for both "Persona 3" [P3] and "P4") told me that the story would take place in a small rural town. There was no definitive plotline or anything that was set in stone at this point, so I just started sketching out scenes that I associated with the idea of a small rural town. One of the scenes of a pure, natural town like the ones you might find in the Alps. (laughs) Once we have the sketches, we can start brainstorming and discussing things like realism and whether we want to go for a normal high school feel or something more outlandish. As far as the visual aspect goes, that's how we set down the foundation. With a solid base to work off of, I can then turn my attention to coming up with concepts for characters.

At that point, when your work starts to involve the characters, would it be safe to say that is then the realm of the character designer?

Soejima: Yes, you could say that. Though the concept of each character is just the beginning of a character designer's job.

Does the term "concept" refer to a character's external appearance or something more internal like their personality traits?

Soejima: At the most basic level it's just the external appearance, though in our case my work has been known to seep into the character's internal facets as well. I would first get an idea of what kind of character I am drawing from the description provided to me by the team that is responsible for character development, then I would produce what I believe to be the physical manifestation of the person they described to me. A perfect example of the lines blurring would be Chie. I was told her main method of attacking would be kicks, and I designed her appearance to suit that. Then, as we discussed how she would actually move in the game, I suggested we go with a kung fu style. This then led to adding the personality trait "kung fu fanatic" to Chie's character profile.

So character designing really does involve both the external and internal aspects of any given character. Is Director Hashino the one who makes the final decisions on such things?

Soejima: That's another detail that's not clearly defined in our company. (laughs) The director and art director are the ones who technically have the final say, and they are the ones who have to take responsibility for the results. However, we at Atlus prefer to get everyone's input for each decision, even if it's just a minor plot point.

Everyone? You mean you discuss possible changes to the scenario with the scenario team, and graphics issues with the graphics team?

Soejima: No, I literally mean everyone for everything. We honestly build very few walls within our workplace. For example, when I drew an image of Chie, I would get feedback from just about anyone passing by, even if they were not part of the team working on the characters. I'd hear comments like, "That's not Chie!" or "You did it wrong." (laughs) Right up until the very end, when the director and art director have to make their final decisions and stick to them, we maintain a very casual and open atmosphere.

I get the feeling this "casual and open atmosphere" you guys have built is one of the key factors behind the success of "P3" and "P4".

✳ SOEJIMA'S OBJECTIVE

The previous title, "P3", brought an entirely new flavor to the "Persona" series. Everything from the gameplay system to the visuals was revamped, with the result being a truly ambitious and refreshing game. This shift in gears was received well by the fans, as was evident from the game's overwhelming success and glowing reviews.

Soejima: We are very grateful for everyone's support.

Did you refer back to "P3" often while working on "P4"?

Soejima: Absolutely. "P3" really did change the series, and the fans made it clear to us that they enjoyed both the game's story as well as its visual style. It was only natural to think that returning players who enjoyed "P3" would hope to get a similar kind of enjoyment out of "P4", and we certainly did not want to disappoint them. At the same time, we were also keenly aware that "similar enjoyment" and "similar experience" are not the same thing. We didn't want to just dress the same game up in different clothes and send it out the door. Player feedback was invaluable to us, as it helped us decide what should be kept and what needed to be improved.

So it's safe to say that how the "P3" players would react to "P4" was something you took into consideration while you were designing the game?

Soejima: It certainly was. The feedback we got for "P3" included information about what the players didn't like, so we wanted to make sure we made the appropriate changes. On the other hand, a lot of people really liked the style and atmosphere of "P3", so that was something we tried to keep alive. With all of this in mind, it was still important to remember that simply offering a package full of everything the players liked was not our goal.

Why would that be a bad thing?

Soejima: First and foremost because people would be bored. We knew it wouldn't be enough to simply swap out the "3" in the title for a "4" and call it a day. Sure, we changed the theme color from blue to yellow, but if we just told the same story in a different way, I'm pretty sure we wouldn't be fooling anyone. Aside from what the players might think, it also has a lot to do with what we want. We have all kinds of ideas that we want to explore and try, so we think of each new project as an opportunity to do just that.

What kinds of differences did you aim for with "P4" as far as the visual aspect is concerned?

Soejima: I wanted to go for something brighter and warmer. "Dark", "cool", and "sharp" are words that are often used to describe "P3", so it seemed natural to go in the opposite direction. Since "P4" was set to take place in a rural town, I thought it was the perfect stage for a very retro experience; something that isn't too modern or urban, if you will.

You mentioned that there are things you want to explore and try. Can you give us an example of this?

Soejima: The bright warmness I just mentioned is probably the best example of me trying something new, as most of my prior projects have been pretty dark. (laughs)

Is that why you chose yellow as the theme color?

Soejima: Yes, I thought yellow fit the bill for a color that was both warm and bright. Even before the concept and scenario came together, I was already like, "Let's go yellow!" (laughs) It is far too easy for an RPG to get serious, dark, and heavy because it's all about conflict and the problems the characters have to deal with.

That is true. A serious and dramatic story wrapped in cheerful designs seems like an uncommon combination.

Soejima: It's something you can't really avoid, since the various incidents and conflicts are what move the story along in an RPG. I knew "P4" would likewise have some serious themes like death and murder, but more than half of the game is about life at school during the day. School is a fun place... or at least we like to think it was a fun place, offering lots of nice experiences and memories. I think that's what made the brighter design feel less out of place than you might expect. I also thought that this approach would help make "P4" distinct from other RPGs on the market.

"P4" did manage to strike a good balance between the joys of everyday life and the seriousness of a murder investigation.

Soejima: Designing a bright and cheerful RPG was a challenge I had never taken on before, and it was also the polar opposite of the previous game, so I hope the players think I pulled it off all right.

Are there any particular parts of "P4" where you feel you were able to really inject a lot of brightness?

Soejima: The camp screen and the menu screen. These are important screens that you will see often during the course of the game, so I intentionally made them quite bright. These were also the first in-game screens to be designed, so I put a lot of energy into them. In order to visually convey the concept behind "P4", I included cheerful design elements like rainbow stripes and rotating flowers.

So far, despite the fact that "P3" was undoubtedly a tough act to follow, it sounds like the creation of "P4" was not particularly painful or difficult. How was it really?

Soejima: "P4" wasn't too difficult. But I know why. (laughs)

Oh? (laughs) Please, do share.

Soejima: At the very least, each game in a successful series needs to offer two things: the series-specific traits that the players have come to expect, and something entirely new. "P4" had the luxury of following the design trail left behind by "P3", which meant we already knew what we were doing right. With that reassurance, we felt free to experiment with new ideas and things we wanted to put into "P3" but didn't get to. The first follow-up (in terms of similar design style) is always the easiest because, with only one other example to look back on, the players don't quite know what to expect from you, so you can give them everything they want while still surprising them with what you had up your sleeve. Assuming it will even happen, I think "Persona 5" will be infinitely harder, as expectations will be higher and the players will be ready for anything I might try. (laughs)

✳ RECURRING ELEMENTS

You have been a part of the "Persona" series since "Megami Ibunroku Persona" ("Persona 1"). In your opinion, are there any particular visual or design elements that are representative of the series?

Soejima: As far as design goes, I suppose Igor and the Velvet Room are the easy answers, as they appear in every game. Other than that...

What about the butterflies? They seem to appear throughout the series.

Soejima: Ah yes, the butterflies. They've become a sort of tradition since "Persona 1", and there's actually a sort of reasoning behind that.

Please tell us!

Soejima: In "Persona 1" and "Persona 2 [Innocent Sin / Eternal Punishment]" ("Persona 2"), there was a character named Philemon who was sort of Igor's superior and had a special relationship with the Persona powers. Whenever Philemon would interact with humans, he would wear a mask that had a butterfly design theme. His presence was quite obvious in "Persona 2", but he wasn't in "P3" or "P4". I wanted some new way to keep his legacy alive, to make the player feel like Philemon was still watching over them... and looking into them. The butterfly therefore became a sort of symbol that represents Philemon.

I see! So that's why the butterfly is present at "P4" save points! Philemon is watching over our play sessions!

Soejima: The checkerboard pattern, or any pattern where light and dark colors (like black and white) are set next to each other, is another recurring design element. It is meant to represent the fact that people have two sides to them, and in a way is an expression of the Persona power itself. The black and white pattern that appears when you dive into a TV in "P4" is something I drew. That part wasn't technically my job, but I had visualized it so clearly in my head that I simply had to draw it.

✳ RURAL TOWN x STYLE = RETRO

"P3" was set in an urban area, while "P4" took us to a small rural town. How did this drastic change in setting affect your design process?

Soejima: "P3" technically took place in the not-so-distant

▲▶ A couple of sketches that were done when "P4" was just getting started. This process was repeated many times until the game's concept was solidified.
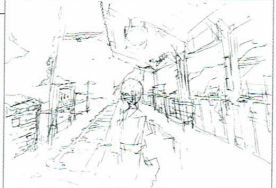
▲ All of the promotional materials centered around the color yellow, the game's theme color. This bright yellow helped to draw people's attention when displayed in storefront windows.

INTERFACE DESIGN
CONCEPT DESIGN
CAMP MENU
BATTLE MENU

▲▶ A couple of the menu screens that were considered. Quite a few different variations were considered, and became the foundation for the game's design.
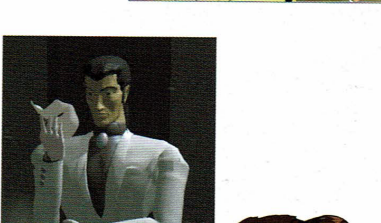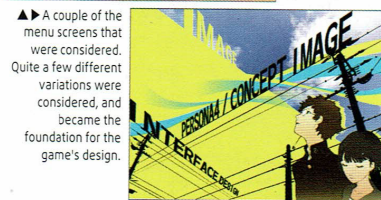
▲▶ Philemon, as he appeared in previous games.
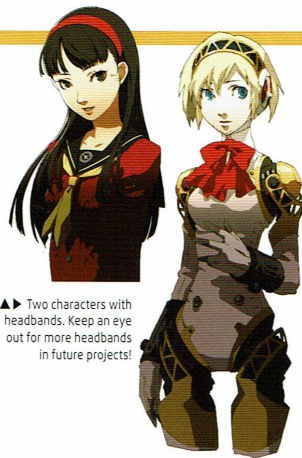
▲▶ Two characters with headbands. Keep an eye out for more headbands in future projects!

◀▼ Concept art of a rural setting. The logo design was also experimented with at this stage.
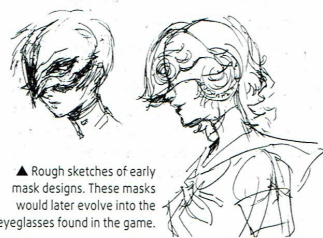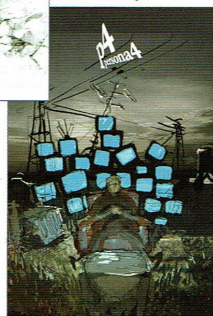
▲ Rough sketches of early mask designs. These masks would later evolve into the eyeglasses found in the game.

▲ Character Drama CD "Persona 3" Vol. 1
Price: 2,625 yen / Available now
Release / Distributed by: Frontier Works
All five CD jackets were drawn by Soejima.

future, though it was heavily based on the present. Our goal with "P3", visually speaking, was some solid realism. We wanted the players to look at the characters in the game and be able to say, "I know someone like that," or look at an area and say, "I've seen cityscapes like that in real life." In order to get this level of realism, I took field trips out into the city to get reference for my work. I also went on field trips for "P4", but that was mostly to get a feel for landscapes and atmosphere.

What about the people?

Soejima: Well... I kind of did some fibbing with the people of "P4". (laughs) I guess you could say I twisted the truth a bit to suit our needs. That was probably the biggest influence the rural setting had on my design process.

You fibbed? What do you mean?

Soejima: I tried observing townsfolk in rural areas, but to be totally honest, they were just like the citizens of Tokyo. People don't walk around dressed like archetypical country bumpkins the way they used to. I staked out some high schools to observe real students walking home from school. I was ready to take notes on the passé fad of loose socks, and students who wore their school jersey all day. Instead, all I saw was a parade of high schoolers texting or chatting on their cell phones while they walked home from school. If I used exactly what I observed, complete with the extremely short skirts, you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between urban school life and rural school life. I started to wonder if I would have to resort to populating the game with students in lame helmets riding their bikes to school while wearing jerseys, but I knew that wouldn't be in line with the stylish design trends established by "P3".

You did mention that you planned to offer up more of what the players liked about "P3", which included its style.

Soejima: Right, so above all it had to be stylish. That's when I decided to shift my mode of thinking. Most people associate rural areas with being outdated, and what is a stylish way of saying outdated? Retro! So instead of sticking to strict reality or resorting to false archetypes, I decided to spread a retro layer on a foundation of truth.

So that's what you meant by "fibbing".

Soejima: What choice did I have? Honestly, you can travel as far away from the urban core as you want, but you'll be hard-pressed to find a girl who wears her hair like Yukiko, complete with the headband.

I have to admit, when I first saw an illustration of Yukiko, I said to myself, "You don't see girls like this anymore." (laughs)

Soejima: The headband is so retro.

Of all the countless retro fashion options, why did you opt for the headband?

Soejima: ... I have a thing for headbands. (laughs) I'm pretty sure it's safe to say that I always have at least one character wearing a headband in every project.

You do? What about "P3"?

Soejima: Aigis. (laughs)

Oh, right. (laughs) By the way, I heard Tokyo served as the model for the setting of "P3".

Soejima: Yes, it was based on Shinagawa to be more specific.

You mentioned you went on field trips to gather reference for "P4"... which town was the model for the setting of this game?

Soejima: Er... I can't get too specific about this, but suffice to say it's a place in central Japan with a tall mountain and a lake. It might not be what most people would consider "rural", but...

Is it the town with a large amusement park nearby?

Soejima: Um... maybe? (laughs)

When you hear the word "rural", what are some of the first things that come to mind?

Soejima: Pretty flowers, pure natural spring water, and high

schoolers riding bikes to school wearing their jerseys and white helmets... which is basically a description of a certain TV commercial for bottled water. (laughs) This slightly vague image is all I can really conjure up, but obviously that's not nearly detailed enough for use in design work.

When it comes down to design work, a processed and staged image of the country life doesn't cut it as reference material.

Soejima: Not even close. When the staff got together to talk about what a rural setting would look like, Hashino thought back to his small hometown and said, "Real rural towns aren't like the ones in TV commercials and folk songs. They're lonely, desolate places." This made us realize that rural areas, which we city folk tend to picture as clean and ideal, have their own kind of darkness. In order to ensure that our team had a unified vision of the game's setting, we knew we had to actually go out there to see it for ourselves.

What did you see?

Soejima: We saw one of those mostly abandoned shopping districts, where most of the local independent shops were closed down, locked away behind heavy metal shutters. I was quite speechless as I took in the reality that was displayed before me. The conflict you see between Junes and the local shops in "P4" is a reflection of how things are in the real world. The rivers also proved to be quite a learning experience. They weren't the beautiful, wild things flowing through untamed tracts of nature that I thought they would be. They were mellow strips of water surrounded by concrete walls, being channeled through forests of utility poles, not trees. That atmosphere is something I really needed to feel in order to understand. As a result, I think I was able to depict a fairly accurate representation of a town that is somewhere between a bustling metropolis and a field of dairy cows.

❋ UNFINISHED UNIFORMS

What was the design concept behind the school uniforms?

Soejima: I wanted to go for something stylish. I was pretty certain that cool-looking uniforms would go over better with the players, too.

They turned out very cool... too cool, almost. They seem to carry a certain urban vibe.

Soejima: If you are under the impression that rural schools have hideous uniforms, that's a total misconception. If anything, the schools in rural areas have uniforms that are cuter, cooler, and far more detail-oriented than your average urban school uniform, resulting in some really neat styles.

Ah, I had no idea. The uniforms in the "Persona" series have proven to be quite popular among the players. What sort of thought process goes into designing the school uniforms?

Soejima: It's true that the players have high expectations when it comes to the uniforms. Personally, I want them to be cool, of course, but also focus on the reality of the actual articles of clothing. I don't want to design anything too fantastical in terms of shape and color. If it seems too outlandish to be a school uniform, or if it would be impossible to make in real life, it's not going to work in the "Persona" series. I want the "Persona" series uniforms to be fresh, cool, and original, but also realistic, and that's a pretty fine line to tread. This is something Kaneko (Kazuma Kaneko, a designer and illustrator) really struggled with for "Persona 1" and "Persona 2", so I was extremely careful when trying to stay within the limitations of what is plausible in "P3" and "P4".

As far as uniform design is concerned, it seems as though a blazer would have allowed for more freedom in terms of shape and color, but is there a reason you didn't go that route?

Soejima: The main reason was because I really wanted to make "P4" distinct from "P3", so I didn't think that continuing with the blazers would be the right way to go.

Fair enough. Were there any particular meanings or ideas behind the uniforms?

Soejima: For "P4", I was working off of the initial idea that everything about this setting has a very rural vibe, which translated into an incomplete sewing job on the uniforms. The design makes it look like the uniforms are unfinished, with temporary guide stitches and other lines clearly visible on the surface. It's not actually falling apart at the seams, of course, it just has that serious lack of finesse. Since "P4" is about young men and women, you could say they aren't yet done maturing... and that's something I tried to express through the uniform designs.

So there really is more to the uniforms than meets the eye. Did you have a blazer uniform when you were a student?

Soejima: I did in high school, but my middle school uniform was just a regular gakuran. I didn't really do anything to personalize my gakuran either, except maybe remove the collar. I was a pretty ordinary guy. (laughs)

❋ DESIGN FLOW AND GLASSES

Now let's turn our attention to your character design process. When exactly did the "P4" project start?

Soejima: It was awhile ago, so don't quote me or anything, but I believe "P4" was officially set in motion just after "P3 FES" was released. I should mention that "set in motion" doesn't necessarily mean that the story and characters started coming together. Far from it, in fact. Our first step involved discussing how we might make "P4" different from "P3". We discussed things like player feedback, what player expectations were most likely to be, and other considerations that would affect the direction we took the game in.

Were any of the details certain at such an early stage?

Soejima: One of the first major decisions we made was regarding the setting, and the fact that the game would take place in a rural town. Another was the idea about having murder as part of the main storyline.

How long did this phase last?

Soejima: Approximately two months. The whole team spent those two months brainstorming about aspects that would make up the core of "P4".

At this point in development, did you already have some ideas about characters?

Soejima: No, at this stage I was focused more on working on those concept sketches of the rural town I told you about earlier. The sketches weren't just for me, as I hoped they would somehow help the rest of the team during our brainstorming sessions.

So after two months of brainstorming, did the characters start to take shape in your mind?

Soejima: Not at all. (laughs) The characters don't get much thought at that stage. Even the team responsible for coming up with character concepts had nothing to submit at that point.

I see it's going to take awhile before we get to the part about the characters. (laughs) What about the eyeglasses, then? At which stage did those come into play?

Soejima: If I recall correctly, the word "eyeglasses" popped out at around the same time the concept of entering a TV set did. The whole glasses issue is an entire story in and of itself, though.

How do you mean?

Soejima: The idea came about separately from the usual workflow in which the team would create the core concepts of the game. In "P3", a character summoned their Persona by shooting him or herself in the head with the gun-shaped Evoker, and this elicited some pretty strong reactions from the players. In turn, this intense response made me feel like I had to do something equally interesting in "P4". I knew the gimmick had to take visual form, and after much thought I came up with the glasses. What I hadn't counted on, however, was the overwhelming opposition I got from the rest of the team. It was pretty unanimous that the idea of all the characters wearing glasses simply wouldn't work. The whole idea came very close to being tossed out the window.

Why did you press forward with the glasses, despite the opposition?

Soejima: I think I pushed the idea forward because of the opposition, rather than despite it. It seems to me that most good ideas, or at least most memorable ones, tend to have a considerable number of people against them. Within the maelstrom of opposition, as long as the people who love an idea outnumber the people who hate it, I consider it a win in terms of design. Also, as the story of the game was further refined, the presence of the glasses became more and more reasonable.

How did you decide on the designs for the glasses?

Soejima: I just applied each character's concept and personality to the glasses.

Did you consider something other than eyeglasses at any point?

Soejima: We did toy with the idea of masks, but I knew glasses would be the right way to go!

How right you were! (laughs) What about the whole notion of entering a TV set? When did that idea come around?

Soejima: That came after we had established the environmental setting and the murder theme. Having a murder in a small town would make for such a dark story, kind of like Kosuke Kindaichi's experiences in "Yatsuhaka Mura". (laughs) If we had just left it at that, the whole game and its story would have been pretty standard fare. While trying to figure out some kind of visual element that could add intrigue and possibly some fun to a story like that, I came up with the TV world.

With regard to the development timeline, when would you say that was?

Soejima: Approximately three months in, I'd say.

So about a month after your initial brainstorming phase. Do you remember exactly what you were working on at the time?

Soejima: Hmm... I believe I was drawing the CD jacket for the "P3" drama CD.

"P3" work!? So even though you had "P4" going, you couldn't drop everything else to focus on your new project?

Soejima: I'm pretty sure everyone on the team had "P3" and "P4" work going on simultaneously. I'd be thinking about "P4" while I worked on "P3" stuff, though. The schedule for "P4" was already laid out, so we just did what we needed to do, while still sparing time to formulate ideas for "P4". Also, the people on our team are kind of slow starters when it comes to new projects. (laughs)

You already told us that the first images you sketched out for "P4" were of the rural setting. What did you draw next?

Soejima: The uniforms. Since all of the main characters were going to be wearing uniforms, it was important that I figure them out early. Designing the uniforms also helped to solidify the game's overall vibe, as it mostly revolves around the school. After the uniforms were done, I moved on to the Protagonist. I believe that was about four months in.

Why did you pick the Protagonist as the first character to draw?

Soejima: Because the Protagonist is the only character who exists independently from the story.

Oh, I see. All of the other characters were waiting for decisions regarding the scenario and the details of their concepts. (laughs)

Soejima: The Protagonist is not designed based on the story, but rather on the very ideas we are trying to execute with the game. I guess you could say the Protagonist is sort of a medium through which we try to convey the game itself. This is what makes it possible for me to work on the Protagonist earlier than all of the other characters.

In what order did you draw the rest of the characters?

Soejima: For the rest of the characters in any project, I tend to draw them as their concepts and roles are established. Generally speaking, that means I'd be drawing them in the

order that they appear in the story.

When did you draw the sub characters?

Soejima: The community story and the main story were handled by different people, so the pace at which certain materials crossed my desk varied quite a bit. As a result, all of the sub and community characters were on a different progression track than the main characters, and this situation also meant that I couldn't draw up all of the community characters at once.

Who was the last character you designed for "P4"?

Soejima: The last character was... Adachi. (laughs) He was a tricky one because his role in the story changed so much over the course of development. Initially, he...

Hold that thought! Let's save that juicy tale for another time.

❋ CREATING NAOTO

Now I'd like to talk about the process of designing a character, from start to finish. Who would serve as the best example for this?

Soejima: I suppose Naoto's a good candidate. There're a few anecdotes regarding her development, and I also have more freedom as far as information I can share.

Okay, we'll use Naoto as our character design example. When you first started working on Naoto, was the character's gender already established?

Soejima: Nope. At the time, we still had her categorized as a male character.

What sorts of details were established before you got started?

Soejima: Her name, Naoto Shirogane, and the fact that she is an investigator. Naoto comes in pretty late in the game, so I had to start drawing her before her part in the story was fully developed.

What kind of character was Naoto initially slated to be?

Soejima: A big jerk, really. That's why my first draft portrays her that way. But I was told that I took the "jerk" thing too far, and that's when I made my second draft. (laughs)

Was her gender decided by then?

Soejima: No, she was still a male character. She was set to be a "small, cute boy", so my second draft changed her from a jerk into a more harmless, boyish character. At that point, Naoto was pretty much set, but then the idea of making her a girl started floating around... which required me to quickly add some eyelashes and heels to my second draft.

That's when the final Naoto design was completed?

Soejima: Yes. The only thing with Naoto is that you're not supposed to know that she is a girl right away, and it also wasn't supposed to be obvious that she's a girl dressed as a guy. So we used my unaltered second draft when we wanted to portray her as a boy, and then used my final design when we wanted to portray her as a girl. That's why there really isn't much difference between those two designs.

Is it common in game development for a character's details to change so drastically?

Soejima: It's more than common. It's almost a guarantee. (laughs)

Have you ever run into a situation where you are really happy with a certain character design, but are then forced to change it? What happens then?

Soejima: We put it to a vote.

A vote!?

Soejima: We'll post up the potential design and get everyone's opinion. As an example, I might really push for one particular design, while Hashino argues that it's not quite right. So we'll stick the design up on the wall and let everyone have at it. We'll discuss what's right or wrong about it, and after getting everyone's input, I'll sometimes have no choice but to make changes.

So there are times when you don't get your way?

Soejima: Absolutely. I'm the character designer and the art

director, but if I simply enforce whatever I want, there's a possibility that I will be ruining the team's shared vision of our project. I'm only human, so I'll be the first to admit that I can make mistakes and easily be blinded by my own thoughts about something. That's why I'm more than willing to seek out other people's opinions about things. Having said that, if I feel really strongly about something, I'll definitely fight for it.

❋ FAVORITE CHARACTERS

Of all the characters you designed for "P4", do you have a favorite?

Soejima: My favorites are the Protagonist and Naoto. Naoto's just really easy to draw.

What is it about her that makes her easy to draw?

Soejima: Naoto's facial structure is quite similar to that of the Protagonist from "P3", with the major differences being the tips of her hair and her eyelashes. I guess you could say it's the kind of face I like.

What about the Protagonist?

Soejima: I like the Protagonist for completely opposite reasons. When designing the Protagonist for "P4", I wanted him to be very different from the Protagonist of "P3". The Protagonist in "P3" is relatively cute and shy, so I made the Protagonist for "P4" more masculine and wild. I think I was pretty successful in making them opposites of each other, and that's one reason why the "P4" Protagonist is one of my favorites. Another reason is because I have to draw more variations of the Protagonist than any other character. I especially like the ones where he has a confident smile on his face. Not to mention the fact that I specifically designed his face to suit glasses.

What do you mean by that?

Soejima: Well, with a character like Yukiko, putting a pair of fairly angular glasses on her can define her entire vibe, and I know some people like that kind of girl, so that's why she is the way she is. With the Protagonist, I was quite meticulous about his facial structure, particularly the length of his hair and the position of his eyes. The hair comes down to just above the glasses, and by utilizing specific positioning like this, I was able to create a face that would naturally draw attention to the glasses and make them look extra cool.

So it's all about the hair and eyes?

Soejima: Yes. How can I explain it...? If you recall, there was a certain Osamu Tezuka character who wore sunglasses and had the reflected glint shining through a curtain of hair. That character was super cool.

That kind of character is something that you particularly like?

Soejima: Any character with that visual flavor usually gets to me, yes. I like how the glasses glint under the hair, and how it all looks. I worked this personal preference into the Protagonist's design, but because I designed his face specifically for the glasses, he does look a bit plain without them. (laughs)

Did you design any other character's face specifically to highlight their glasses?

Soejima: No, just the Protagonist's. He kind of acted as the marketing core for the game, and since a big part of the game was the fact that the characters fight while wearing glasses, it wouldn't have made sense if the main character looked dorky in them.

So for the other characters, their faces were all about their personalities?

Soejima: Yes. I drew their faces first, then designed glasses that would look best on each face. The Protagonist has very few portraits that appear during the game, and his personality is set by the choices made by the player, so his personality and role in the story were not particularly important factors to consider for his design. Since most of the images of the Protagonist that the player sees during

without their glasses on, and their personalities played an important role in the story, so it was important to focus their facial designs in that direction.

Who is your favorite character outside of the main characters?

Soejima: The community character Matsunaga.

That was a pretty quick answer... Matsunaga? She's the one with... the cheeks, right?

Soejima: Yes, the cheeks. (laughs)

But she's so... er, I mean... what is it that you like so much about her?

Soejima: I thought she was really cute when I drew her, but she wasn't very popular among the staff. People would say that she wasn't cute or that she was too boring, and someone even said that just looking at her made them feel depressed. (laughs) A lot of people had doubts about her as a character. But, as I mentioned earlier, if I feel strongly about something, I will fight for it. I fought for Matsunaga. Having put myself out there for her, I guess it's only right that I officially declare her as one of my favorite characters. (laughs) So there you are. I highly recommend Ayane Matsunaga. (laughs)

Okay, well now that we've heard about this special sub character, would you please tell us your favorite Persona?

Soejima: It's gotta be the Protagonist's Izanagi. My reasons are pretty simple. He's cool and fun to draw... especially his face.

We talked about different kinds of school uniforms earlier, and I noticed that Izanagi wears a gakuran while the school uniform for this game is the blazer.

Soejima: I worked really hard to make the school uniform fashionable, so I wanted to draw something more traditional. I thought about our preconceived notions about rural areas, and images of classic hooligans, gang members, and cheering squads came to mind. I also thought about the god Izanagi from folklore, who was basically the equivalent of Adam from the Garden of Eden, so he really had to be a "man's man" in terms of design.

It's true that many of the myths surrounding the original Izanagi put an emphasis on his manliness and manly achievements. In fact, compared to other mythical figures, he is probably one of the ones with the most defining traits and characteristics. All we really know is that he was a truly manly god.

Soejima: Exactly. Izanagi is the representation of sheer masculinity, and I thought I could convey that through a sharp gakuran. In my mind, a cheering squad member in their gakuran = "the man"! (laughs)

❋ SOEJIMA'S DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

In your numerous other published interviews, as well as this one, you often say the word "coolness" or talk about how something "has to be cool." Is this something that is very important to you?

Soejima: I do think "coolness" is a very important factor in character design, but with regard to how often I say the word, I think it's kind of a bad habit of mine more than anything. (laughs)

Just a habit? Still, it's a word that your fans have come to very prominently associate with you, so perhaps you can explain to us what "cool" means to you.

Soejima: People often use the word "cool" as an adjective, when describing a car, or a person, etc. I, on the other hand, tend to use it as a way to express a more lengthy idea that is difficult to put into words... like the notion of a "widely appealing pattern of design", or something like that.

Are we to understand that when you use the word "cool", it has another definition to it outside of its commonly accepted usage?

Soejima: It's a little hard to explain exactly, but I suppose

think the actual appeal is in the coolness of the design pattern that is the combination of a character and glasses...

So it's a design thing?

Soejima: Yes, a design thing, a structural thing... I'm trying to think of a way to explain it properly. It's a bit cliché, but think of a character wearing a gakuran and holding a katana. That's cool. Now think of a character who has one eye hidden. They tend to be perceived as cool. These are, therefore, design patterns that produce "coolness", and I do put a lot of value on such things. Whenever I use the word "cool", I'm generally referring to these sorts of patterns. All of the examples I just offered, the glasses character, the katana-wielding gakuran character, and the one-eyed character, are all "cool by way of design pattern". I guess you could say it's a category in and of itself.

By "category", do you mean like a stereotype?

Soejima: Yes, it could be considered a stereotype. While doing research for character designs, I have discovered many such categories or stereotypes. There are countless "cool" stereotypes, and they appeal to a wide range of people because, in a sense, they are stereotypes. Another example of a "cool" stereotype would be girls wearing headbands.

So it's important to know your categories.

Soejima: It certainly is. When designing a character, it's very important to first realize that there are such categories out there. But you can't just apply the raw stereotypes to your work; otherwise the end result will lack any freshness or originality, and it will bore your audience.

Like when people say, "This is just like that other thing."

Soejima: Exactly. Sometimes that's enough for your purposes, but in most cases simply knowing the categories is not enough. I probably say the word "cool" very repetitively whenever I'm trying to talk about a fresh new take on a category.

Once one has an understanding of the categories, is there anything important to keep in mind?

Soejima: It's important to think. You have to think about how to use the category, and how to bring it to life. You already know people who fit into the category (that's why it exists as a category, after all), so now it's up to you to figure out how to apply that knowledge. For example, people like glasses characters. But if you simply plop a character with glasses into a game, they'll just stay at a "normal" level.

"Normal"...?

Soejima: Right. People who like glasses characters will like the character, but that's just way too common and wouldn't really be "cool". That's why, for a fresh twist, you might try something like putting a pair of glasses on every single character.

I see what you did there!

Soejima: I'm glad. (laughs) In this way, I infused a new flavor into the pre-existing category of glasses characters, and the result can therefore be viewed as a "new idea". In marketing, they talk a lot about certain elements, and how they're familiar with this or that, but that this and that together is a whole new ball game. It's the same with character design. We knew glasses characters were cool and well-liked, but instead of just putting one in our game, we turned everyone into glasses characters!

Is this "coolness" philosophy something that you applied to the entire "P4" game?

Soejima: Yes, but not just "P4". I also applied it to "P3". If you think about typography, you can find all kinds of interesting things just by browsing the web. You'll also find lots of stylish things. With regard to RPGs, so many new frontiers have been established, from fantasy to sci-fi and even modern day settings. They've all become common and familiar things, and yet it is not as common to find these elements combined.

familiar with in ways that were different from what people might expect, I think we were able to produce something truly stylish. This is probably the main reason why many people anticipated these games so much, and could also be why they consider it to be a "cool" new category.

By applying your own twist to a pre-existing category, you were able to create a new category. With that in mind, did you intentionally make "uncool" decisions for any part of "P4"?

Soejima: As a way to offer a sort of contrast or balance, we did decide to go for a "cheap chic" look with the design of the overall graphics for "P4".

Please tell us more about that.

Soejima: The most cutting edge graphics tend to choose their own players. That is to say, some people are turned off by the intensity or unfamiliarity of new graphics engines, so opinions regarding any new graphics are always pretty divided. We wanted to keep the graphics at a level that remained at least somewhat familiar for most people, a level that they could readily understand or feel like they were comfortable with. Coincidentally, our Sound Composer, Meguro (Shoji Meguro, the composer for both "P3" and "P4"), said something similar about music. It was nice to know that he feels the same way about music as I do about design. We want our players to think the game is cool, of course, but we also want them to feel like they are part of the coolness. That's why we didn't aim for the lofty heights of modern technology, but rather kept ourselves at about half a step in front of everyone.

Can you give any specific examples of this balance?

Soejima: The spinning flower on the interface is a good example, I think. Also the badges on Chie's jersey. I was careful not to make any of the characters' outfits too "perfect". Since "P3" was all about the hard-edged and cool vibe, I wanted "P4" to offer more of a friendly and casual atmosphere.

"P3" was intentionally designed to be hard-edged?

Soejima: Well, when it comes to the characters, I actually thought I had designed them to be quite soft. I suppose it was the storyline of "P3" that really made it all seem much sharper and darker.

❋ ACCEPTED? REJECTED?

It's been two months since the release of "P4", and it has already proven itself to be a success. With regard to the parts of "P4" that you personally handled, are there any new insights or thoughts that have occurred to you with the passing of time?

Soejima: Quite a few. The player feedback and reviews are the biggest things. As time goes by, I receive a lot of feedback about my work in "P4", and I tend to reflect back on my work through the opinions of others rather than simply sit around, asking myself what I think of it all.

The opinions of others? That was quite an unexpected answer... do you worry about what other people think of your work?

Soejima: Of course I do. Especially because I am both an artist and a designer. I think any kind of creator gives at least some thought, if not a lot, to user reviews.

Can you think of any reviews that really stood out for you?

Soejima: It's not so much the details of the reviews and how they're worded that I'm interested in, but rather the bigger picture of whether my work was accepted or rejected. Design work is kind of like gambling, in my opinion.

Gambling? How so?

Soejima: Every time I design something or decide on a direction to take, that's something that will be judged in the end. For example, when designing the main character, I'll come up with a lot of ideas first before finally picking one to go with. I have no way of knowing if the idea I picked will be better or worse than the other ideas in the long run. It was also my idea to use yellow as the theme color, but I had no idea if the majority of players would find this choice

appealing. It all involves risk and choices.

So in your opinion, all of the decisions you made about the game, whether big or small, are like bets you placed?

Soejima: Yes. It's not like I do so thoughtlessly, but in the end it does all feel like a big gamble. Earlier I said something about how good ideas are met with a lot of opposition, right?

I believe you said, "most good ideas, or at least most memorable ones, tend to have a considerable number of people against them."

Soejima: Right, thank you. If I make the wrong call on something like that, then I'll know because the people opposed to the idea will end up outnumbering the people who like it. In such cases, I'll have to admit to a design failure on my part. On the other hand, constantly choosing something because it doesn't stir up any opposition is, in my opinion, quite pointless. It's like a form of surrender.

It's like avoiding the battle altogether.

Soejima: I guess you could call it avoiding risk, and although stuff created like that will tend to be comfortably liked by most people, it will never become number one in anything.

So you don't believe in that tactic?

Soejima: If that is what is best or necessary, and you intentionally design something to be that kind of neutral, I'd say that's a valid choice. An example might be designing a bland character in order to guide the focus to another character. Personally, I like turning everything into a battle, whether it's the game's theme color or the color of Chie's jersey. Having said that, it's not like I went into every little detail trembling with anxiety about whether my next decision would be the one to bring the entire game down. (laughs) Anyway, that's why I am very interested in reviews that talk about specific parts of my work.

In a manner of speaking, the player reviews are like the results of a horse race for you.

Soejima: I make a lot of choices that I am uncertain about, so each review is potentially an important lesson to be learned. I am sincerely grateful to everyone who takes the time to offer their feedback.

If you were to review your own work, what would you say?

Soejima: Good job. (laughs)

Short but sweet. (laughs)

Soejima: To be honest, I don't think the public opinion about "P4" has settled yet. It makes me happy when I hear that players like "P4" more than "P3", but in some ways I feel like they're only saying that because they just got done playing "P4". There's no right or wrong when it comes to opinion, of course, but opinion does tend to be swayed by emotion or the circumstances of the moment. I imagine that a more objective opinion of "P4" will emerge later on down the line... possibly when "P5" is released and "P4" has become a memory. This applies to myself as well, since I'm still busy drawing "P4" illustrations. "P4" is not over yet as far as I'm concerned, so it's all still very fresh to me and I like it very much, but that may be a biased opinion. I think I will be able to take a step back and really critique my work for myself once I'm done with everything related to "P4".

❋ MESSAGE TO FANS

To finish things off, would you please give a personal message to the people reading this book?

Soejima: Um... what sort of people do you expect will read this book?

... People who like the "Persona" series. Most likely people who are fans of your work. You can think of it as a direct message from you to your fans. (laughs)

Soejima: Oh dear... what should I say? ... "I am thou... thou art I..." ... I sound like a total Megami Tensei geek!

You said it! (laughs)

September 6, 2008 at the Atlus offices

◄ The popular main character from "Persona 3" helped to solidify Soejima's "coolness" theory.

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